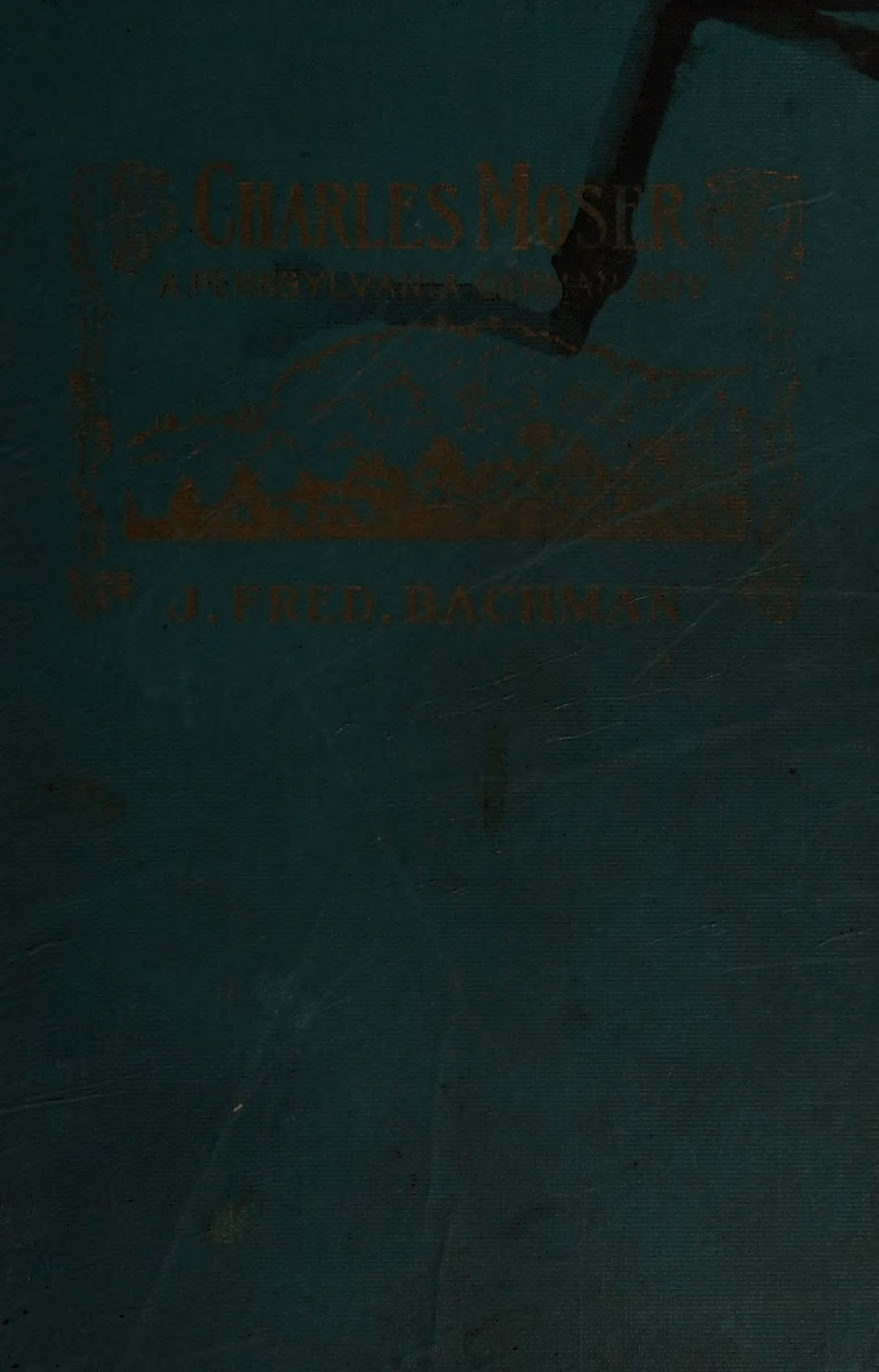
CHARLES MOSER
J. FRED. BACHMAN

CHARLES MOSER LEAVING HOME.

CHARLES MOSER

A Pennsylvania German Boy

BY

J. FRED. BACHMAN

READING, PA.:
I. M. BEAVER, PUBLISHER
1916

Copyright, 1916, by
J. Fred. Bachman

TO

MY WIFE

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED

CHARLES MOSER

PREFACE

In this volume the author sets forth the wanderings and adventures of "A Pennsylvania German Boy." The hero leaves his mountain home after a quarrel with his mother and a beating by some ruffians, and after years of sojourning in New York City and the central part of the State of New York he again returns to his home, meets his mother, marries the young lady for whom he was continually pining in his ramblings and settles down to enjoy life; but in after years he becomes the heir of his former benefactor, and again returns to the central part of the State of New York, where he with his wife makes his permanent home.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Charles Moser Leaves School	9
II.	Gap Bach	19
III.	A Beating and a Breaking Away	27
IV.	Awaiting Train for New York City	37
V.	Charles Enters New York City	47
VI.	Charles Secures Employment	57
VII.	Working on a City Job	65
VIII.	The Spelling-bee	77
IX.	Regina Calls on Mary	85
X.	Jim DeStay Calls on Regina	95
XI.	Jim Plans Mary's Humiliation	103
XII.	Charles is Promoted	113
XIII.	Charles Meets with a Mishap	127
XIV.	Charles Becomes a Sailor	137
XV.	Charles Sees a Town Politician	149
XVI.	Charles is Appointed Checking-Master	159
XVII.	The Book-keeper Arrested	171
XVIII.	Charles in a Lumbering Plant	187
XIX.	Charles Works at the Saw-mill	199

CHAPTER		PAGE
XX.	Colonel Musser Prepares to go to New York City	209
XXI.	Charles Gets the Position of Book-keeper at the Mills	217
XXII.	Charles Meets Colonel Musser and Wife	227
XXIII.	Charles at Colonel Musser's Home	239
XXIV.	Doctor Grey Calls on Colonel Musser	249
XXV.	Colonel Musser Meets the Cashier	257
XXVI.	Charles Attends a Spelling-bee	267
XXVII.	Colonel Musser Quarrels with Charles	277
XXVIII.	Charles Moser Returns to His Native Place	287
XXIX.	Mary at Home Bewailing Her Fate	297
XXX.	Charles in His Mother's House	307
XXXI.	Mrs. Moser Forms Conjectures about Charles	317
XXXII.	Charles Leaves His Mother's House and Goes to the Sale	327
XXXIII.	The Marriage of Charles and Mary in the Old Home Church	339

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Charles Moser Leaving Home.....Frontispiece
Charles Moser's Home.....Page 20
Colonel Musser..... 70
Mary Brown..... 105
Charles Moser and the Foreman..... 220
Charles Moser with His Mother on His Return Home..... 307
Mrs. Colonel Musser 346

CHARLES MOSER

CHAPTER I

IT was a sultry morning in June. The quaint old town of Bethlehem was enveloped by one of the mists that was slowly rolling over the hills and valleys from the Lehigh river not far distant. The sun occasionally peeped out from behind the clouds on the young and light-hearted as they assembled in groups on the lawn before the old school building to bid farewell to companions and friends.

The school had closed the preceding day. Noise and confusion were heard in and about the old building during the night and morning. Trunks were repeatedly locked and as frequently unlocked to make certain that everything was at its proper place.

Everybody seemed in a hurry and excited, save a boy, who stood by himself idly watching the weather-vane on one of the buildings as it slowly shifted its position from one point of the compass to another, as if trying to make up its mind which way to point.

His garments compared oddly enough with the garments of the other students. His coat and trousers were made of the coarsest material of home-spun goods.

His hat showed signs of hard usage, while his shoes were heavy and devoid of polish.

His head was bent slightly forward, his hands were clasped over his back, and his face bore a sad expression. But his mind was not idle, for that massive head was full of ambition and schemes which would have put to shame the minds of men more mature in years. Sometimes he thought he would give up caring for earthly things; then, again, his mind was full of schemes and anticipations.

He was standing more than an hour in this conflict with himself. Again and again he looked at the old building with its old gray massive walls towering before him. Then, again, he turned and looked in the direction of his distant home so dear to him. Suddenly he was awakened from his reverie.

"I dare say, young man, the boys were having a lively time last night," said a gentleman who accosted him.

"They had," he said with a surprised look on his countenance.

"Yes, they removed Mr. Ladd's gate and hung it on a tree near the creek, and—"

"You don't say?" ejaculated the young man. "They must have had a lively time."

"But that's not all. You noticed the sign over Mr. Jacoby's candy shop? Well, they took down the sign and placed it over the entrance to the livery stable. You know that Mr. Jacoby and Mr. Funk are bitter enemies—very bitter enemies, indeed. Mr. Funk

wants the sign down, but he will not allow Mr. Jacoby to come on the ground to remove it. He swears that he will see it rot there sooner than allow Mr. Jacoby to come on the property," chuckled the gentleman.

"I know nothing about it," exclaimed the young man. "The examinations were very severe the last several days. I was tired, and their pranks did not bother me."

"But that's not all. They stole Mr. Stody's mule, which he drives by the side of that old white horse when he peddles milk around town, out of the stable, took him up that steep hill back of the barn near by, tied him between two trees and placed a lot of hay around him. There he stood this morning eating away at the hay as if nothing had happened. The greatest fun was when Mr. Stody tried to take him down. The old mule was afraid to go down forwards. Then the old man resorted to a trick and tried to back him down. Every time the old man would back him down several paces, the old mule would get scared and clamber back again. The students stood in the road below and poked a lot of fun at the old man. At last he got tired of their nagging and called to them: 'Hey, you young mule drivers, you had fun enough standing there and looking at this old mule and myself. Now come up and help me get him down.' "

"Did they help him?"

"Sure! They threw off their coats and caps, and went up to his assistance and got the mule down in a jiffy. They handed several coins to Mr. Stody, seated

him on the old mule and sent him down the street at a lively rate. When he—"

"Well! well! Charlie Moser, I found you at last," cried one of his friends. "I looked through the entire building for you. I could not think of leaving before having a hearty shake of your hand. Coming back next term, I suppose? I hope we shall meet again. Oh! do come and see me during vacation." So saying he jumped into the carriage by the side of his father and was off.

Charles Moser gazed after his friend until his form was lost to view in the distance.

"It is no use standing and gazing in that direction," said he to himself. "It is the other way I must be going," and suiting his actions to his words he threw his carpet-bag containing his books and a few well-worn garments over his shoulders, and turning in the opposite direction from that taken by his companions, walked briskly in the direction of his home on the outskirts of Gap Bach, where he knew loved ones were waiting to greet him.

He trudged wearily along the dusty road, meeting and conversing with other travelers. Becoming tired and hungry, he sat down to rest in the shade of a tree. His mind was uneasy and he fell to thinking. At times he whistled some familiar tune to pass the time away. Then, again, he listened to the birds as they fluttered about in the branches of the trees and warbled their songs.

"Ho, boy! Wake up! This is the wrong time of day to be sleeping. Wake up and watch my team until I have fixed the log-chain to the hind wheel of my wagon. I have a very heavy load of hay, and I fear my oxen cannot hold it going down this steep hill," said a farmer as he shook Charles gently to awaken him from a sound sleep.

"Very well! very well" said Charles as he sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Come, me boy. Don't be slow about it. I want to be going. It is nigh unto dinner time. My oxen are hungry and I am some distance away from home," said the farmer as he again shook him gently by the shoulder.

"I will fix the chain for you, and you can care for your team yourself," said Charles, again rubbing his eyes and then shading them from the glaring sun as it shone in his face.

"I hardly think you can do it. Better watch the oxen while I fix it myself."

Charles assured the farmer that he could fix it, and quickly went to work and adjusted the chain. Before he was away from the wagon, the oxen started on a brisk run down the hill and Charles narrowly escaped injury. He secured his hat and carpet-bag, and followed down the hill, now and then roaring with laughter as he saw the wagon going from one side of the road to the other, the hay flying in all directions, and heard the farmer calling "woa! woa!" at the top of his voice as he followed them in their flight.

"Tut! Tut, boy! You take ahold of the oxen," said the irate farmer, first looking at Charles and then at the hay as it lay in heaps along the road, "and I will give them a sound beating. That is what they need most of all."

"I see no use in doing that," said Charles, still shaking with laughter to the annoyance of the farmer. "You got down the hill in good time without an accident. Better let good enough alone, for you might make things worse."

But the farmer's temper was up to the highest pitch, and he thought differently about it.

"Do you think I will let these animals go unpunished?" he said. "Look at my hay. It is strewn all over the road the entire way down the hill, and I must get some one to assist me to load it."

The kind-hearted Charles pitied the oxen.

"Do not go to the trouble of beating them," he said pleadingly. "I will help you load your hay. It will not take long if we will work with a will."

The hay was soon loaded and the farmer again started on his way home. Charles trudged along by his side, laughing and relating stories about school until they reached the farmer's home.

"Young man," said the farmer as Charles again swung his carpet-bag over his shoulder and turned to the road, "you were a good help to me and gave me good advice. You will remain and take dinner with me."

Charles, although hungry, felt reluctant to accept the invitation.

"Tut! Tut, boy!" said the farmer smilingly. "Do not fear. There will be plenty on the table for us all; besides, it will be pleasant to have you relate some of your whopping fine yarns to my wife and myself about your school life." Turning toward the house, the farmer cried to his wife: "Maggie! Maggie! You must git dinner ready in a hurry. Put one plate more on the table than usual, for I invited this young man to take dinner with us. I am very hungry, and I suppose the lad is—"

"Yes, I suppose you are both hungry by this time. I'll have dinner ready in the twinkling of your eye," said the merry housewife, interruping her husband.

Charles seated himself on a bench under the grape-arbor overhanging the kitchen door and began making friends with the farmer's little son. But the farmer's dog seemed to be suspicious of Charles. He looked at him with an evil eye and gave a low growl when Charles took the child on his lap.

"Faith an' what's the matter with ye?" said the farmer, slapping his dog gently on the head. "This young man will not hurt me darling," he continued, at the same time taking the child in his brawny arms and tossing it above his head to the amusement of the child. "Come, now, doggy, and make friends with the lad. Don't look so surly."

The faithful animal seemed to understand his master, and he and Charles soon became the best of friends.

Dinner was ready, and Charles and the farmer entered the kitchen to partake of their meal.

It was a spacious room. The white, clean floor was devoid of carpet. The light shone dimly through the well-curtained windows on the table, and the fire crackled merrily on the hearth.

"Take another," said the farmer to Charles as he declined the fifth corn cake. "You must eat. You have a long journey before ye this afternoon; besides, this is all paid for, and you are welcome to it. Now—"

"Why of course, sonny, take another one," said the kind-hearted wife, interrupting her husband, at the same time placing another corn cake on Charles' plate. "Put plenty of butter and honey on it. There! That's the way to do it. Now try it," she continued as she placed an extra quantity of butter and honey on his cake.

It was several hours past midday when Charles bade "Good-bye" to the farmer and his wife, and walked slowly to the gate and looked upon—well, nothing, for the tears rolled down his cheeks. Then, regaining his composure, he started briskly down the road in the direction of his home.

"That boy has a lot of good common sinse in that big head of his'n." said the farmer's wife when she and her husband turned away from the gate after bidding Charles good-bye. "Just see, our little darling wants him to remain with us," she added.

All sorts of memories rushed through Charles' brain as he walked briskly along, his carpet-bag tossing now on one shoulder and then on the other. He imagined he saw his father, mother and sister standing by the door of the little log-house fondly looking towards the road by which he would approach his home.

But there was another sweet thought in his mind, which had to be side-tracked for the evening.

"Hello, there, Charlie Moser, I suppose you are on your way home. Yes, step right in and I'll have you home in less than no time," cried one of his neighbors on catching up with him.

"Why, yes, I am very thankful for the ride," said Charles, handing his carpet-bag to the gentleman and seating himself by his side in the conveyance.

"What have you in here, Charlie?" asked his friend. "Is it filled with gold dust?" he chuckled.

Charles could not suppress a smile.

"It contains my books and clothes. I am very glad you caught up to me, for—"

"I suppose your books and clothes were getting heavy. Oh, by the way," said the gentleman, shifting the conversation, "are you still attending school?"

Charlie nodded assent.

"Want to be a teacher, I understand."

"I may turn to that profession when I have finished my course in school."

"Had you not better give up going to school and turn to farming? You know there are some farmers nearby who are anxious to get good young men on

their farms," said his neighbor, nudging him with his elbow.

"I—I would like to finish my course, and—"

"Oh, bosh; stop going to school. Don't you know that the teaching profession is very much under par anyways?"

"Yes, I suppose that is the opinion of some people, but the time may come when the profession will be considered much above par."

"Hardly think so, Charlie. At least you and I will never see that day. Oh, by the way, Charlie, are you going to take the direct road home?" said his friend, again nudging him in the side with his elbow when they neared the place where the path led in another direction from the road.

Charles made no reply.

"How about it?" asked his friend, holding in his horse and chuckling to himself, "Better make up your mind. We are nearing the place where you must get off, if you intend to go home in a roundabout way."

Charles hesitated for a moment. Then he answered slowly as he turned crimson: "I think I will get off here and go home by way of the old school path."

CHAPTER II

GAP BACH

THE small sleepy-looking village familiarly known as Gap Bach was an odd-looking place, as it crouched closely to the foot of the mountain as if to shelter itself from the cold and blasting winds as they swept across the mountains from the north.

It consisted of a dozen or more small shingle-roofed one-story log dwelling houses, a small hotel and a rickety little store.

The quaint old houses were scattered so far apart that it gave the village the appearance of a dilapidated old grave-yard with here and there a solitary grave-stone standing up as a marker of the last resting place of some of the pioneer settlers.

The news of the day, or rather of the year, was gathered from the driver of the old stage coach as he made his weekly trips through the village, perched on his high seat, calling out the news as he urged his tired steeds along; or perchance Old Phil would have some news in store as he made his yearly trips through the village buying the skins of wild animals which the hunters were fortunate enough to bring down with their trusty rifles.

These people were at a great disadvantage for securing an education. Many superstitions were attrib-

uted to them, but probably they were no worse in this respect than their contemporaries in other frontier settlements.

They generally regarded Wednesday as an unlucky day, and would avoid the making of any purchase or entering into any business transaction whatever on that day. Still they did not court the goddess of fortune by nailing a horse-shoe over the door, nor did they consider it an unfortunate thing to cast the sweepings of the kitchen or rooms out of doors.

They were charged with practicing witchcraft, and no doubt many of them believed in the "black art," yet they never indulged in the crime of branding and hanging witches.

It was at this time, and amid these surroundings and conditions, that Charles Moser, the hero of our story, was born. He attended the village school and assisted his father in farming and working at the cooper trade. He was an industrious and ambitious lad, and made rapid progress in his studies. He soon began to outstrip his teachers, and by the advice of his pastor and to his great joy was sent to the parochial school some miles distant. Here he was studious, active and a jolly good fellow, the pet of his teachers and the friend of his classmates.

But Charles Moser's dream of bliss, which he indulged in both waking and sleeping, was not destined to last long. Before the summer vacation had ended his father died, and he was compelled to assume the responsibility of caring for his mother and sister.

CHARLES MOSER'S HOME.

He was now unable to continue his studies at school to his great sorrow.

The change from the school room and his merry frolicking playmates to the farm was not made without a struggle.

At this period of our narrative the fertile valley of the Lehigh river resounded with the shrill whistle of the locomotive announcing the completion of a railroad. This public improvement was a great advantage to the country surrounding Charles Moser's home. It caused an influx of new life from other states and cities, and the native-born inhabitants became more energetic and prosperous.

Our young hero, however, did not seem to share in this prosperity. It was noticed that he became sullen and morose, and would spend hours at a time alone in some quiet nook or place in the near vicinity. He seldom associated with young people, but spent too much time, as his friends thought, at his "foolish books."

But "Old Regina," who practiced the art of fortune telling and bore the unsavory reputation of being a witch, could tell what was the matter with Charles. For had she not been present at the last "spelling bee" and saw how funny he acted?

"He is not sick," she declared to one of her friends. "No sich thin'! No, indeed! Charlie Moser not spell love! I declare! I saw how he blushed an' sit down an' did not spell, an' then Mary Brown, on the other side, spelled it, an' they both laughed. He's dead in love with that girl, that's what he is." And "Old

Regina'' turned up her eyes as if scanning the world beyond the skies and struck one of her characteristic attitudes.

The old witch was right. Charles was in love with Mary Brown, the young lady for whom he built so many air-castles and for whose father he worked so frequently. He could feel proud of having her affections bestowed upon himself, for she was a beautiful light-hearted young lady with light brown hair, blue eyes and a smiling face. Her golden hair clustered around her forehead and her clear blue eyes sparkled when she was in a merry mood.

She was not only handsome, but noble-minded. She had attended the same school with Charles, and was far advanced in refinement over many young people of her age. No one could point the finger of scorn at her.

Charles' mother opposed the match, because she required her son's assistance, and thought both Charles and Mary were too young to get married. Nor was Mary anxious to get married then, for she had lost her mother some time before, and was now caring for an invalid father and a young sister.

One evening when Mary put her little sister to bed, the little girl complained that Charlie Moser was coming too frequently to see Mary, and would soon take her away from papa and herself. Somebody, of course, had suggested the latter idea to the little three-year-old. Mary laughed lightly, tucked the bed-clothes tightly around her little ward, and was just leaving the

room, when the watchful child heard their pet dog, Beaver, set up a low howl.

"There's Charlie again, I tell you. A good night tiss for him," she said, resignedly, and laid her head on the pillow, soon to pass away into dreamland.

The faithful dog was heard capering around some one. A rap at the door, a gentle "Come in;" then the door opened, and the familiar and always welcome visitor entered.

Charles and Mary wanted to accompany some other young people to a spelling bee, to be held a few evenings later, several miles distant. The spelling bees of those days were great social events for young and old, furnishing as much entertainment as lectures, concerts and plays afford to city folks at the present day.

The necessary arrangements were soon made, and the young lover stood ready to say good-bye and leave for home, where he expected to find a good warm supper and a kind mother waiting for him.

"Charlie, please do not take the path through the fields and woods to-night," pleaded Mary as they stood before the door. "There may be danger for you."

The young man understood the hint, and his pride was stirred. He drew himself up to his full height and looked at Mary with a scornful curl on his lips. "Take the road to go home! I guess not. If Jim DeStay and his pals venture to interfere with me, they will have cause to regret it ever after," he said.

"But," persisted Mary, "they are three, and you are one, and they may have—"

"Oh, never mind," broke in Charles; "I can hold my own against five like them. Don't fear for me."

Mary knew that many of the young men in and around the village of Gap Bach were enemies of Charles and herself. She had frequently been informed by the "old witch," who knew the gossip in and around the village, that threats had been made against her lover, and that even his life was in danger. She knew that her lover was brave, and she dreaded the day when his enemies should attempt to put their oft-laid plan in execution.

"I cannot understand why they can be so spiteful against him. He is so kind and helpful to everyone. When poor widow Jones had no wood to burn, and it was so cold that other young men did not venture out of the house, he went to the grove and chopped some wood and took it on the hand-sled to her home, so she could warm herself and her dear little children," said she one day to Regina.

But Regina promptly replied that it was her beautiful face and his good habits that made the mischief, and that she was the envy of all the young men.

It is seldom good policy for a maiden to warn her young lover directly when she believes him in peril. When a young man's pride is roused, discretion is at a discount, and the best-meant advice is likely to have a contrary effect. Charles Moser fully appreciated his sweet-heart's motive, but he defied his rivals and little dreamed how dearly he might have to pay for not heeding her warning.

Mary retired with a troubled heart. She had received the accustomed parting caress, but not the promise that would have relieved her fears. Her words had not been idly spoken. She knew what threats had been made against Charles, and was not at all reassured by his brave words.

At the time that Charles was talking with Mary and felt so unconcerned about her warning, his arch enemies were not far distant watching his every movement and laying plans for his chastisement.

During the night Mary awoke with a start. She had seen her lover climb a fence at a woods near a deep dark stream. She had seen two ruffians rush on him with clubs in their hands, and had seen him fall with blood in his face.

"It was only a dream caused by worrying," she told herself. But she dreaded its forebodings and could not sleep again that night.

After awhile she arose from her bed and paced the floor. Then she went to the window and gazed out a long time in the direction Charles had taken.

CHAPTER III

A BEATING AND A BREAKING AWAY

MARY'S anxious warning made but a momentary impression upon her lover. He had no fear, and his natural gaiety quickly came back. Blithesome and light-hearted as a lark he ran along the familiar school-path, beside a babbling brook, singing and whistling by turns, his excited fancy dwelling upon the happiness the future seemed to hold in store for him.

"I shall take mother and sister to live with us when we are married," he said to himself. "It will be so pleasant for mother to have a nice home in her declining years."

He cleared the fence with a bound. But there, in the leafy darkness, his pleasant thoughts were interrupted by a screeching and rustling that might have disturbed the equanimity of an older man than himself. His heart began to beat faster, and he stopped a moment, as he recalled the story about the Indian whom his grandfather had shot near this spot and whose restless malignant spirit might be walking here.

"Nonsense!" he reassured himself. "Our pastor says that there are no ghosts. If the spirit has gone to a good place, it does not want to return; if it is doomed to punishment, it cannot do so."

He was about to go on, when a dark figure broke through the thicket and a voice, hoarse with emotion, accosted him, "Well, you was over to see Mary again, wasn't you? You are trying to steal her from me. I will—"

Charles promptly recognized his questioner. He was Jim DeStay. Charles was not at all afraid of him and answered boldly, "Suppose I was; is that any of your business?"

"You had better be keerful or you might git a good thrashing."

"Thrashing!" repeated Charles with a touch of merriment. "Why, I had plenty of that exercise to-day. I am hardly anxious for any more to-night."

Desiring to pass on Charles laid his hand on Jim DeStay, who had placed himself directly in his way, to push him aside. But no sooner had he done so, then blows were showered on his neck and face so rapidly from confederates, who now came to Jim's assistance, that Charles was compelled to seek protection. He managed to get his back against a tree, and was in the act of getting his flail into play, when an unexpected blow from the rear landed so heavily on the back of his neck that it caused him to pitch forward and fall on his face.

Charles was partly stunned, but managed to get to his feet. He rushed at Jim and struck at him with all the force he could muster, but he was dazed and his fist went short of the intended mark. He, however, succeeded in grasping Jim by the collar, and the strug-

gle began anew. It was an unexpected turn of affairs to Jim, but he managed to put up a bold front.

The two combatants shoved each other from place to place, and tripping over some object, went sprawling to the ground, where they rolled about among the rocks and brush, at the same time dealing terrific blows on each other's bodies.

Jim was getting the worst of the fight by this time, and trying to save himself from further punishment, he broke away from Charles and jumped to his feet. Charles followed him and managed to keep a good hold on his collar.

But Jim's friends were not idle. They showered blow upon blow on Charles' face and neck as chances offered, and soon he staggered in different directions, dodging imaginary objects. Finally he succeeded in grasping hold of a large tree, and using it as a protection from the rear, defended himself bravely.

Jim, seeing that Charles was almost exhausted, called at the top of his voice: "Boys, stand aside. Let me finish him up. I'll make a good job of it."

But not so. One of his confederates threw a rope over Charles' arms, drew him tightly against the tree and held him, while Jim and the others belabored him lustily with stout switches, which they had prepared for the occasion.

Charles now called for help, but the echo only mocked his cries, and the brook seemed to laugh at his plight. At last he sank down with a groan, almost fainting away. Then the cowardly ruffians, fearing that they might have killed him, took to their heels.

After awhile the victim of their revenge managed to extricate himself and limped home. His mother was waiting for him in the kitchen. She was in bad humor, for she practiced the good old maxim, "Early to bed and early to rise," her son having stayed much beyond the proper time. Moreover, she had that general weakness of a good housekeeper to feel almost insulted when compelled to hold a meal until the victuals were cold or overdone.

Charles did not want his mother to know what had occurred. To hide his embarrassment he asked: "Is supper ready? I am hungry."

"I should think it is ready," she answered, impatiently. "It's past eight o'clock now. We should be in bed already. Where have you been so long?"

Between mouthfuls Charles explained that on his way home he met several friends who had invited him to attend a spelling-bee at the Gap school the following Tuesday evening, and that he had called on Mary to invite her to accompany him.

"That's it," said his mother, sharply. "You called on Mary. I think you are overdoing it with her."

Mrs. Moser had been working for Jim DeStay's father that day, and Jim had not failed to tell her the gossip going on about Charles and Mary, adding some of his own.

Charles was nettled by her remarks and replied: "I call on her once a week. Do you think that's overdoing it?"

"You mean once a week regularly, and several times between. I hear you and Mary talk of getting

married. Now, you ought to know as well as I do that you are both too young to think of such a thing. What do either of you know about housekeeping?''

''Mary ought to know something about it, having kept house for her sick father for the past three years. As for me, I am sure I'm willing to learn.''

''Yes,'' cried his mother, indignantly, ''Mary is a good girl. I have nothing against her, but she is too young to be married, and so are you.''

''Other women were married when they were as young as Mary is now,'' said Charles. His mother understood the hint, but she was not to be overcome so easily.

''Well, you haven't any means to marry on, neither of you,'' she said, sharply.

''I didn't say we were going to be married, did I?'' Charles interrogated.

''No, but it is the common talk of the neighborhood. Now, I have raised you and you haven't earned much for me. You had better wait a few years and help me, for you know I am poor and must do all kinds of work for a living, and—''

''I'm helping you all I can,'' interrupted Charles, impatiently.

''Yes, you are, but thrashing for a bushel of rye a day when rye is worth only sixty cents a bushel, don't go very far for food and clothing.''

Charles had finished his supper and rose from the table in worse humor than when he sat down. Had his mother stopped her complaints now, she would

have saved herself many an unhappy hour in the years to come. She had had the last word, but unfortunately she was not satisfied and kept on for awhile in the same strain. When she received no further reply, she seated herself in the old rocking-chair and began to cry over her imaginary troubles.

This was too much for the kind-hearted Charles, for he loved his mother dearly. He seated himself behind the stove on the wood-chest. His pet cat came purring by his side, but he gave her no caresses. His mother glanced at him repeatedly and thought she saw marks on his face, but said nothing more.

Charles sat on the wood-chest for a long time, when, without bidding good-night to his mother and sister, he went upstairs to his room in the attic. He threw himself on his bed without undressing and burst into tears.

"Oh, mother!" said Charles' sister, "how could you ever talk in that way to Charlie? He is so good and kind to us both. He works every day, summer and winter, and never has a cross word for us."

"He has no business to get married. He is too young to get married," snapped his mother.

"But he is not married yet, and—"

"But he will get married," retorted the mother, interrupting her. "I heard all about it. He is too young to get married."

"But Mary is so kind to us. She kisses me every time she sees me, and speaks so kindly to me. We could go down to her home to live, and would have a nicer house than here."

"But I am not going down there to live. I have a home, and here I will stay as long as I live," answered the angry mother.

The daughter ceased speaking. Deep sobs broke away from her heart, while tears filled her eyes.

Charles lay on his bed sobbing and pondering. His mother's words had hurt him more than the lashes of Jim DeStay and his pals.

"Shall I submit to all this?" he asked himself. "Mother and the neighbors are becoming more spiteful toward Mary and me every day. I am sure she would be a good wife and do all she could for mother. We are young, but I know we could get along nicely. Mary is as old as mother was when she married father, and, besides, she has experience in housekeeping, while mother had not. She is neat and tidy, and I know she is a good cook, for the meals I have eaten there are as good as those which mother prepares. I have seen her in the field when her father was ill, and she was very helpful to him. And her sister ——, what a sweet little girl she is, and how she enjoys riding on my knee.

"Mary attends church regularly and never comes late. She is always ready to teach her class in Sunday school. Doesn't mother know all this?

"Mother receives all the money I earn. Other boys dress better than I do and have money to spend. I am tired of living this way, and I will make a change. Mother will learn that I am not so bad a boy after all as she thinks I am."

Here Charles did his mother great wrong. She had not considered him a bad boy and never said so. He was drawing unwarranted conclusions, even as she had done.

He arose from his bed and walked the floor. He paced back and forth for some time. At last he made his resolve. Some time after midnight he gathered some of his working clothes and several books into a carpet-bag, and placed them under his bed. Then he disrobed, laid down and tried to sleep, but in vain.

Ere morning dawned he dressed hastily and slipped cautiously downstairs. He had reached the road, when he remembered the cane his father had given him with the admonition never to part with it. Retracing his steps, he noiselessly re-entered the house and secured the coveted heirloom.

"It is all I have in this world," he said to himself. "I may never see home and friends again, but this cane shall go with me wherever I roam."

Returning to the road, Charles cast a long tearful glance at the old log house, where his loved ones were now sleeping peacefully, all unconscious of his stealing away. Then he turned toward the woods and entered the path he had taken the evening before. Bitterness filled his soul as he passed the place where his rivals had maltreated him. They had caused the beginning of his troubles, and he would settle their score some day. He now entered the road and passed on at a rapid rate.

Regina, the old witch, stood at the window smoking her pipe when he passed by her house. She recog-

nized him as he passed along. "Law sakes alive," said she to herself, "where can Charlie Moser be going at this hour of the day?"

After several hours of brisk walking Charles reached the rickety railroad station. The agent, a short, stout, jovial-faced man, was getting things ready for the early train, now past due.

Charles walked to the office window and absent-mindedly asked for a ticket. The agent, whose hearing was slightly impaired, drew closer and asked pleasantly, "Do you want a ticket?"

"Yes, sir, I do," said Charles.

"Where to, east or west?" inquired the affable official.

"Anywhere! I don't care which way, just so I get out of this God-forsaken place. I am sick and tired of it."

"Beg pardon; I did not catch all you said."

Charles, recovering his equanimity, modified his strange request. "Give me a ticket for New York," he said.

"You want to go to New York City?" said the agent as he stamped the ticket and passed it through the window. Charles made no further reply, but took up his carpet-bag and cane, and stepped to the platform, ready to board the train.

The agent could easily see that this young man, who looked so odd in his old-fashioned clothes, with his carpet-bag and cane, was in trouble; that he was nervous, distracted, and evidently anxious to get away.

He was about to accost Charles again, but a second thought restrained him. "I might offend him," he said to himself; "and, besides, it is bad policy to meddle in other people's business."

Had the agent known who the young man was and spoken kindly to him, no doubt Charles would have taken a second thought and retraced his steps.

The agent pondered all day about the mysterious young man, and in the evening tried to relieve his mind by relating the story to his colleague in the office.

"Was there any inquiry made about him during the day?" asked his friend.

"That is the most singular thing about it. I expected some one would inquire about him, but no one has yet done so."

His friend thought lightly of the incident, and saw nothing to cause the agent any uneasiness. He simply remarked: "You could hardly hope to find him in New York City by this time, I think."

"Oh, well! I think not, but—"

Here the conversation was interrupted, and nothing more was said about Charles on that occasion.

CHAPTER IV

AWAITING TRAIN FOR NEW YORK CITY

AS he stood near the edge of the station platform awaiting the train, Charles Moser cast longing glances toward his old home. He regretted the hasty move he had made, but thought it too late to retrace his steps.

The local train drew up and the conductor shouted, "All aboard!"

As Charles stepped upon the platform of the car, the conductor remarked: "Young man, you had better go to the smoking car with that bundle and old stick."

Charles felt inclined to resent the imperious manner with which the man accosted him, but controlled himself and answered pleasantly: "They will do no harm to anyone. I will take good care of them." Thus saying, he passed on into the rear car, which contained passengers of both sexes, most of them destined for New York City.

The conductor repeated his suggestion, but Charles gave him no further attention. He sat down by a window and looked out over the fertile valley. He noticed the cattle as they were huddled together in the barn-yards. He watched the bronzed and hardy farmers as they paused in their labor when the train sped swiftly by.

He was aroused from his reverie by a tap on the shoulder and the conductor's request, "Your ticket, please."

On receiving the ticket the conductor looked inquiringly at Charles. "Going to take in New York City, young man?" he said.

"Yes, sir," replied Charles.

"You're going to a very busy place."

"I've heard so."

"Is this your first trip to New York City?"

Charles answered very courtly in the affirmative.

"You had better keep your eyes wide open when you get there or you might lose yourself," said the conductor, smiling.

To this Charles made no reply, but thought to himself, "If others can get along, then I can."

With well-meant advice gratuitously offered to the young traveler, who considered it misapplied, the conductor left him to his own melancholy thoughts.

The train soon drew into the quaint old town where Charles had attended the parochial school. He looked at some of the familiar old places and unconsciously grasped his carpet-bag to leave the train, but suddenly changed his mind and remained seated.

The train sped on, awaking the echoes of the hills with shrill blasts of whistles and clanging of bell as they neared stations. The noise, the confusion, the ever-changing scenes and the stentorious announcement of the places they were entering served in a measure to dispel the home-sickness of the runaway youth.

Charles was frequently disturbed by the cries of a child belonging to a chubby woman sitting near him. She frequently said: "Come, dear! You must not annoy the young man. You will offend him." But as the child became more restless, the woman said in a more commanding tone: "Now, Charlie, that will do. It is enough now."

This stern command startled Charles Moser. It seemed like the command of his mother in years gone by. "Poor little fellow," he thought; "you seem to be as much in trouble as I am."

Charles could not avoid casting wistful glances at all the passengers. He took particular notice of an elderly lady and gentleman dressed in the height of fashion who occupied the seat before him. Their conversation was distinct, and he perceived that they spoke about the scenery, industries and inhabitants.

Charles could not help glancing at their wearing apparel and jewelry. He perceived that it was of the best quality and latest style. He compared their clothing with his home-made attire, much to the disfavor of the latter. "Well," said he to himself after making a careful survey of his muscular arms, "my clothes may not be in fashion now, but I will see the time when I shall wear clothes that are in fashion."

As Charles was thus contemplating, the lady said: "Papa, I am very thirsty and nervous. Will you please get me a glass of water?"

"I find it difficult to walk when the train is in motion," replied the gentleman. "But," he added,

"when the brakeman comes along, I will request him to get it for you."

"Perhaps the young gentleman will get it for me," said she as she looked appealingly at Charles.

Charles took the proffered silver cup and got the water. He noticed that the passengers stared, and that some had the unkindness to snicker at him. He felt very awkward.

"What a strong, well-built young man!" commented the lady to her husband in an undertone after she had thanked Charles for the water. "He reminds me very much of our Charlie," and here a mother's tears gushed forth anew for her lost son.

A moment later she suggested to her husband that he reward him for his kindness.

"Here, young man, take this money for your trouble. You may need it when you get to the city," said the old gentleman, abruptly; "don't refuse it."

"This train stops here. All passengers out," cried the conductor when the train arrived at the junction.

Charles sauntered about the station as he awaited his train for the city. Some passengers were standing and sitting sullenly around in the station; others, evidently business men, gathered in groups and discussed the latest improvements of the day, while some of the younger and light-hearted drew together to talk and crack jokes at the expense of others.

In imagination Charles was fighting his battles over again with Jim DeStay and his pals. During this contest his eyes wandered to another building near by,

where he beheld a group of immigrants who had reached America several days before and were on their way to one of the western states. They were light-hearted and happy, and frequently they would all unite in singing one of their national songs. Occasionally some one would mount on a chair or box and sing a wild-hunting song, while the rest joined in the chorus, if the tune was a familiar one to them.

"Why can I not be happy like these poor people?" said Charles to himself. "They left home and friends, and still they are happy. I must make the most of my troubles. I will—" His attention was suddenly drawn to another part of the building, where he beheld one of the patriarchs sitting on a box with a violin in hand playing a favorite waltz, while some of the young and light-hearted enjoyed themselves in dancing and making merry.

Some one in the party, seeing the longing look of Charles, beckoned him to join in the dance. Casting aside all reserve, he stepped on the floor, and, taking the proffered hand of a rosy German lass, was soon whirling around at a rapid rate with the others. On and on went the dance. Charles made many a misstep, but was as often guided aright by his partner. Becoming dizzy and exhausted, he sought the open air.

"Should he join the immigrants and go with them to the then distant West, become a farmer and own large tracts of land, or should he stick to his first resolution and go to the city?" was the thought uppermost in his mind.

Charles' resolution was quickly made. He would go West, start life anew and forget the past.

But Charles' trials were not over by any means. They were rather beginning. For among the crowd at the station were some college boys on their way home. They were in high glee. They had won a game of cricket at some college and were reviewing the game. They wore their college caps and colors, and every now and then made the station ring with their college yell.

Presently they saw Charles. "Oh, ho," cried one, "look at that young country bumpkin. Let's have some fun with him."

"I tell you what we'll do," said another; "we'll poke some Latin at him."

So saying they walked up to Charles, and the first speaker, making a comical bow, accosted him: "Well, old fellow, you're on your way to the city, I see."

Charles eyed him quizzically. "Yes, sir," he answered quickly. "Do you think there is any room there for me?"

The young student was taken somewhat aback by the counter-question, but he was not to be baffled. "Yes," he replied, "there is always room there for a stultissimus." He had meant to use a plainer term, but at the last moment took recourse to his Latin.

He certainly expected this rustic "green-horn" to stumble at that word. But Charles replied promptly: "There must be room for one anyhow where they dumped you out."

The first student was quite discomfitted, but one of his fellow-students came to his aid. "Aha," he said to Charles, "you know some Latin, too."

"Just a little," answered Charles.

"Will you please repeat this for me and explain: 'Ego asinus sum?'"

"Goodness," said Charles, raising his voice, "if you call yourself a fool, why shall I repeat it before all this company?"

The students gave another college yell and made a dash for the train, which was just drawing up. Charles wavered in his determination, but suddenly he grasped his carpet-bag and boarded the train, taking a seat by the side of an elderly gentleman. This gentleman persisted in asking him questions about the places along the road, which he, of course, could not answer.

"Vat for place was dis?" asked the fellow traveler.

"I don't know," answered Charles. "The conductor will tell us in a moment."

"Ach, mine goodness," answered the traveler, "de conductor was no good. He no speak blain. No one can not understand him."

Charles was annoyed by the inquisitiveness of the gentleman, who was evidently a German, however the time was near at hand when he was glad to have his company and protection.

A large expanse of water now came to view. On it were sailing crafts of various kinds, from which the sun-burnt sailors lazily viewed the passing train. Seagulls circled overhead in a clear blue sky or alighted

momentarily on the breast of a wave. A derelict vessel, reduced by the elements to a shapeless mass of wood and iron, lay partly submerged in the waters of the bay.

This panorama of sea and sky was a new vision to Charles and roused conflicting emotions within him. Rounding a curve, the train quickly passed through the suburbs of Jersey City and came to a stop amid the noise and confusion of a great depot.

Instinctively Charles turned toward the elderly couple, the only persons who had as yet shown some friendly interest in him. They, seemingly, did not expect anyone to meet them; and though Charles had to take care of his own carpet-bag, he felt prompted to relieve them of a part of their burden.

"I will relieve you of some of your baggage," said he kindly to the old lady as he reached for a valise standing by her side.

"And I will relieve you of your cane," remarked the old gentleman, reaching for it. "It is more appropriate that I should use it than you."

Charles stood motionless outside of the train, for at that moment he was fighting a great battle within himself. Whither should he turn? What should he do in the city, where he knew no one? What were his mother and Mary thinking and saying about his disappearance? Had he not better return home with the next train? Yet how could he face the taunts of his friends with which they would unfailingly greet him, if he came back so soon? It would never do. Here he was

and here he would stick to his purpose. "Jim DeStay and his pals alone have brought all this trouble upon me," he said within himself, gritting his teeth. "But if I ever get a chance at them, I'll pay them back with interest."

His resolve was now made, and he followed his fellow passengers into what seemed to be another waiting room. In a few minutes a gong sounded, and he felt a tremor of the floor. Rising quickly, he looked out of a window and saw to his surprise that he was aboard a ferry-boat gliding over the placid Hudson toward the metropolis.

Charles kept aloof from the passengers. A number of boot-blacks annoyed him considerably.

"Say, mister, don't you think your boots need a shine?" said one in a piping tone.

Charles made no reply and moved away. At that moment he heard the familiar voice of the German.

"Vat was it, poy? You stay py me," he said to Charles on seeing him in his dilemma.

Charles had unconsciously moved to the side of the German, where he was no more molested during his stay on the boat.

CHAPTER V

CHARLES ENTERS NEW YORK CITY

FIVE minutes later Charles entered New York City. The noise and confusion at the landing almost bewildered him. Cries of "Carriage!" "Baggage transferred!" "Shine!" "New York papers!" "This way for your cab!" resounded in all directions.

With a true instinct of self-protection he kept close to his newly-found friends, who started to walk up the street. Evidently they were acquainted in the city, and he could trust to follow them. As soon as they would reach a place where he could make himself heard without shouting, he would state his inexperience to the old gentleman and ask his advice. If need be—not otherwise—he would even tell the circumstances of his coming to the city.

This well-laid plan was quickly and suddenly interrupted. It was impossible that Charles should escape the attention of mischievous street youngsters.

"Oh, look at that green country chap!" shouted a boot-black.

"What has he got to sell?" queried another boy.

"I bet he has cabbage to sell or give away," cried a third.

"He carries his grandpa's walking stick," chimed in another.

Charles gave no heed whatever to these remarks, and the mockers became still more insolent. Presently one of the larger boys rushed upon him, grasping his cane and carpet-bag. "I'll take care of your cabbage and cane," said he, insultingly.

Instantly Charles caught him by the coat-collar and held him against the wall of a house with one hand, while with the other he struck him stinging blows in the face. The fellow beat such a hasty retreat that he stumbled and fell sprawling on the pavement, at the same time calling to his pals: "Golly, boys, he's a corker."

Notwithstanding the sudden discomfiture of his aggressors Charles might have fared badly at the hands of the crowd, had not the old gentleman at the same moment grasped the cane and swung it right and left with telling effect.

Startled by the suddenness of the fight and knowing the temper of her husband, the old lady seized him by the arm and cried: "Oh, papa, for God's sake stop or you will get into trouble."

"Mamma," said her husband soothingly after the altercation, "you must never get scared as long as you see the enemy running."

"But, papa," answered the lady with a smile, "it looked very much at first as if you would have to do the running."

The old gentleman, somewhat irritated, answered: "I never feared Mexicans and Indians, neither do I fear these rowdies."

But the trouble the old lady had feared came the next moment, for a policeman, attracted by the noise, appeared on the scene. The instigators had fled, but the officer, having seen Charles and his friend in the act of fighting, felt it his duty to apprehend them. Grasping Charles and the old gentleman by the arm, he bade them accompany him to the office of a magistrate.

The old gentleman turned on the officer with flashing eyes. "Will you arrest us?" he cried.

"That's right, officer, hook them in," said a bystander who sympathized with the rowdies.

Charles stopped instantly when he overheard the remark, but the old lady warned him not to resist an officer.

The old gentleman glared on the policeman and the speaker.

"I want to talk with those rowdies," he said in fierce tones. "I'm—"

"No more of your talk!" cried the officer excitedly. "Come erlong or yous will rue it."

"That's right," cried another bystander. "Make sure of the old fellow. He's as much to blame for the trouble as the kid. Teach him a good lesson—one he will never forgit."

Charles again made a backward movement, but the kind warning of the old lady that he should not resist an officer still rang in his ears, and he moved along to the office as docile as a lamb. He had reached the goal of his ambition—the great city—yet how undreamed of had been his entry.

The old lady seeing his pitiful glances, said kindly to him: "Don't fear, my boy; you will come out of this trouble all right."

"During all this time the magistrate was busy at his desk and had taken no notice of the party. Looking up he beheld an elderly, tall, stout gentleman and a well-dressed lady accompanied by a young man in odd attire before him. He immediately recognized his old friends. "Well, well, Colonel Musser," he cried, at the same time extending his hand, "how are you? And bless me, how are you, Mrs. Musser? I am pleased to see you."

"There! That settles it," said a bystander. "That old fellow is free already. Those two old chaps know each other, I bet."

Colonel Musser was by no means in a pleasant mood. To be put under arrest for resenting the insolence of street boys had sorely ruffled his feelings.

"I can't answer for my wife and this young man," he replied gruffly, "but for myself I must say that I am not at all pleased to meet you under these circumstances, and—"

The magistrate glanced slyly at Charles.

"Certainly, papa," interposed Mrs. Musser soothingly. We are glad to meet Captain Williams. He is not to blame for this trouble."

"Look at collars and cuffs," whispered one of the bystanders to a man by his side.

"He cuts a nice figure by the side of the kid," retorted his friend.

Colonel Musser overheard the conversation and turned suddenly on his heels. "I want you to understand that—"

"What under the sun is the trouble any way?" exclaimed Captain Williams.

"Trouble!" exclaimed the Colonel. "When we stepped from the boat this young man followed us—"

"Oh," said the magistrate, interrupting and slyly looking at Charles.

"Just one moment, please," said Colonel Musser, observing the questioning look, "and I will tell you." "The fact is," he continued, "this young man followed us, and the boot-blacks and cab-drivers yelled and jeered at him, and finally tried to take his carpet-bag and cane away from him. This was too much, and he resented their treatment by giving one of the toughs a good thrashing. (The magistrate again looked slyly at Charles.) I saw that the entire gang would rush on him, so I took his cane and laid it on the heads of the miscreants not very lightly, of course. When they had taken to their heels, this blockhead of an officer came up and arrested us, and here we are for trial."

The policeman turned on his heels and walked to another room.

"That old skinner," he said to himself; "if I would have my own way about this affair, I surely would 'run him in.'"

"No, no, Colonel Musser," said the magistrate, "there is no complaint made against you. This is evidently a mistake. No doubt he did not see all, or

he would not have arrested you. I think the young man—"

"That's it," whispered another bystander, "just what I thought would happen. That old fellow will be released, and the kid will be locked up and fined. I'll tell him to skip." So moving up to the side of Charles he whispered slyly to him: "Now, kid, git a move on yerself. Don't be settin' here an' sleepin'. The coast is clear."

Charles did not move. He sat spell-bound, but on looking towards the door he recognized his German friend amongst the crowd with his big, long pipe in his hand waving towards him. Charles now took new courage and drew his carpet-bag closer to his side.

"No, no," cried Colonel Musser indignantly. "This young man must not be punished. I will—"

"Well, Colonel, I will look into this matter," said the magistrate.

"That's it," said a bystander with a hooked nose; "the magistrate is after locking that boy up and fining him, and the old fellow will surely go free. That shows that high-toned people can do as they please, while poor law-abiding people git punished. You know we are in a free country. It's a disgrace to the country the way things are managed in this city. I am sick and tired of such a place."

Charles had listened attentively to all that was said, but being somewhat embarrassed, he failed to understand the situation. Seeing his German friend at the door beckoning to him and fearing new trouble from

the Colonel's impetuous words as he conversed with the magistrate, he grasped his carpet-bag, and, unmindful of his cane, rushed out of doors past his friend, who shook with laughter and bade him put one foot before the other as fast as he could, fled precipitately up the street, followed by the shouts of many spectators.

In his flight he dashed against an organ-grinder, upsetting man, organ and monkey. He collided with a newsboy, tossing his papers into the street and running full against a policeman, who failed to arrest him. The newsboy cried over his loss, but a sympathetic young man, who had witnessed the affair, gave him a dime and bade him get out of the crowd. The organ-grinder jumped about seeking blood, and a bystander knocked him down. A policeman, hearing the tumult, rushed to the place just in time to see Charles disappear in the distance.

Charles followed the street, not knowing whither he was going. Suddenly he saw a sign, "Employment Agency," on the window of a large brick building. He had frequently heard of these agencies, and his mind was quickly formed. Rushing unceremoniously into the room, he seated himself in a chair.

The proprietor was busy at his desk, but placing aside his papers, he went to Charles. He noticed that Charles was excited.

"Very warm and sultry," he said after taking a good look at Charles.

"Yes, sir," answered Charles, at the same time gasping for breath.

"Are you looking for a position?" said the man.

"I am," answered Charles.

"You are from the country?"

Charles answered in the affirmative.

"Here is my chance," thought the man, rubbing his hands. "I'll hang him fast somewhere." Then, turning to Charles, he said: "I have a good position for a young man as bartender, and I think you will fill the bill."

"Fill the bill?" repeated Charles, somewhat perplexed, for he was not accustomed to city slang.

"Oh, well, I said 'the bill,' but I mean the position," said the man, somewhat amused. He continued after a moment's pause: "I have a position for a bartender. You are a strong, well-built young man, and I think you will do—just the man for the place."

"No, sir, I will not do. I don't want any position of that kind."

The agent was taken aback. He mentioned several other positions, but Charles refused them all.

"Well—then—perhaps—you would like to be round hosses. All country boys have a liking for that fine animal. A party wants a man for a delivery wagon and to occasionally assist in a ware-house. You can read, I suppose," he said, scanning Charles' face closely.

Charles nodded his assent.

"All right. I think I can fix you up. No doubt you have good recommendations."

Charles now felt the predicament he was in, for seeking employment in a city without recommendations is no easy task.

"I have none," he replied after a painful pause.

The agent was puzzled. He stared at Charles. "No recommendations!" he said. "It is a rule that applicants for good positions must be well recommended. Only good, reliable, honest men are wanted."

"Are all men who have no recommendations considered unreliable and dishonest?" asked Charles earnestly.

"Oh, well, that is not the idea; but strangers seeking positions need some one to say a good word for them. Don't you see?"

Charles was restless, which the agent did not fail to notice, who handed a newspaper to Charles to pass the time away.

"Here," he said, "is an article. I think it will interest you. It is about a young country fellow who came to the city and was arrested by mistake, and—"

"This evening?" queried Charles suddenly, intercupting the overseer. "I did not think that the papers would contain—"

"Oh, no!" cried the overseer with a hearty laugh; "things don't go quite as fast as that here—but as I was going to say, the young man was arrested by mistake, and an old gentleman befriended him and saved him from being 'run in.' Well, to make the story short, it turned out years afterwards that the young man whom he had befriended was a distant relative of the old man and became his heir. I tell you it is an interesting article. Read it."

Charles took the proffered paper.

CHAPTER VI

CHARLES SECURES EMPLOYMENT

CHARLES MOSER sat in the employment office pretending to read, but was unable to do so. He heard some one talking excitedly, and on glancing out of the window he was surprised to see the magistrate and Colonel Musser and his wife passing by.

"What shall I do with this cane?" he overheard Colonel Musser say as he held it to view.

"Nothing," said the magistrate abruptly. Then, after a moment's pause, he added, "Throw it on the wood-pile, Colonel."

"Oh, that will not do," said Colonel Musser, looking sternly at him. "It may be a relic. Indeed, it seems very strange to me that so active a young man should carry it."

"Colonel, you are getting to be a very superstitious man. You must not worry about this young country fellow and his old cane. Take the cane along home and throw it on the wood-pile, and think no more about it."

"Indeed not! I will take it home and keep it until some one will call for it." Then turning excitedly towards the magistrate he added: "I really pitied the poor boy. He was almost scared out of his wits, and no wonder. It seemed as if all the inhabitants of New

York City and the surrounding vicinity were in and around your office. It does not show—"

"Come, come, Colonel," said the magistrate, interrupting him. You must not pass any criticism on New York City. You should know—"

"What should I know?" snapped the Colonel. "I suppose I should know that—"

"Come, Colonel! We must be going. Mrs. Williams is waiting for me. It is time for me to take tea; besides, you must not bother your head about that country lad. He is a little green, and—"

"He is not green," snapped the Colonel. "At least he was not too green to give us the slip."

"He is dressed very oddly; well, I suppose in home-made clothes."

"That does not make him green or ignorant. We have plenty of men in the northern part of the state who dress the same way, and they are not considered green or ignorant by any means."

Captain Williams knew that it was useless to argue with Colonel Musser, and turning to Mrs. Musser he said: "The young man is gone, and that is all there is about it."

"No, that is not all about it," cried Colonel Musser. "You will hand this money to that policeman who arrested us and order him to apprehend him, if possible; and if he is successful in doing so, then let me know. If he is not successful, let me know also."

The three walked off at a brisk rate, while Charles sat and gazed after them, longing for his cane. He felt a strong inclination to go out of the office and de-

mand it. Had the colonel and his wife been alone he would no doubt have done so, but on a second thought he concluded that the old gentleman would be able to take better care of it at the present time than he himself would; besides, he could get it at some future time if he desired to do so.

"Come, mister, here's your man," said the agent, startling Charles from his reverie.

Charles looked into the face of an elderly man who was eyeing him critically and accosted him with a contemptuous air: "Hello, country! Is it you who wants a place?"

Charles nodded assent.

"Git up and let's see yer built," said he, laying his hand on his shoulder very impolitely.

Charles did not like this form of greeting.

"I am not here to exhibit myself," he answered, as he shook the man's hand from his shoulder.

"We need a young man around the hosses and to occasionally accompany the drivers, but I hardly think ye'll do," said the man. Then, thinking a moment, he added: "Let's see your recommend."

"My recommend! What's that?" asked Charles, quickly.

"Oh! you are from the backwoods, and not used to speaking the—"

"I am from the country, sir, and think it no disgrace," interrupted Charles.

The agent shrugged his shoulders. He saw that this rustic youth was not afraid to speak for himself, and he feared an altercation.

"Oh! better take him. He's alright," said he to the overseer, after calling him aside. "I—I think he is a little quick-tempered, but by talking to him in a gentlemanly way you will be able to get along with him—I know you will."

"I need a man in the stable, and I'll try the young fellow. He seems to be 'a little quick-tempered,' but I think I can manage him."

Charles was very glad to get work so soon. It was getting late, and he was very tired and hungry.

"Am I expected to sleep here?" asked Charles, starting back as the overseer opened the door of a room evidently intended as a sleeping room.

"Sure," said the overseer, taken aback.

"I will not do it," said Charles, at the same time stepping back to the pavement.

The overseer was astonished, "This room is good enough for a king to sleep in," he said, excitedly.

"It may be good enough for some kings, but it is not good enough for me," said Charles.

The room was dirty. Harness hung around the walls, and the bed and floor were in an uninviting condition, especially to Charles. He was used to sleeping in an attic-room when at home, but his room and bed were always clean.

"Do you want to lodge at one of the crack hotels in the city, young fellow?"

"I will not lodge here," replied Charles, as he took his carpet-bag and started for the door.

"Hold on, country!" cried his new employer. "Not so fast as that. Come along, perhaps I can find you a boarding-place."

Though nettled by the rustic's determination, the overseer was unwilling to let him go.

"You are an independent tramp," he said in a mocking tone.

"I am no more a tramp than you are," was the prompt reply. "I must work for a living, but that does not make me a tramp any more than it does you."

The overseer was taken aback by the remark. "That is true, sir," he answered.

Charles felt inclined not to go with the man, but having no place to sleep, he changed his mind.

"I must get lodging somewhere," thought he. "I am a stranger in the city, and I had better go with him wherever he takes me than run the chance of not having a lodging place for the night."

The overseer was evidently very much annoyed when he entered Mrs. Newell's house.

"Mrs. Newell," said he, "this young independent wants to board with ye."

"Has he a good recommend? Ye know, Mr. Larkins, all boarders that come to me must have a good recommend." So saying, she turned her head slightly in the direction of Charles and made a critical survey of him from the top of his head to his shoes.

"He is a little particular," said Mr. Larkins sarcastically. "He wants a good room, an' boardin' an' plenty to eat."

Charles bit his lips in anger, but made no answer.

"Well," said Mrs. Newell, "I am not anxious fer boarders, but—well—of course—the lad must have a home somewhere, an' I may just as well take him into the 'ouse an' give him boardin'."

"He is very independent," said Mr. Larkins with a sneer; "he would not sleep in the stable."

"I don't blame him fer that. No young man wants to sleep in the stable with osses. I don't believe Mr. Larkins would sleep in the stable with osses himself," she said, with a wink at Charles.

Mr. Larkins was nettled by the unexpected answer. Exacting a promise from Charles that he would be at the stable early in the morning, he withdrew.

Mrs. Newell now busied herself by getting a supper for Charles. Attired in a plain calico dress, her sleeves rolled up to her elbows, exhibiting strong, muscular arms, her gray hair tucked up under a dusting cap, she looked the ideal housewife to Charles.

Charles was very much down in spirits and greatly annoyed by Mrs. Newell, who was continually questioning him about his father, mother, sister and brothers and the cause of his leaving his home, and as soon as he had finished his supper (a generous one, by the way, although it comprised some strange dishes), he went to his room, locked the door and placed a chair against it. He was completely worn out and soon fell asleep.

During the night he awoke with a start. He heard some noise on the street, but feeling safe in bed, he

paid no attention to it. When he awoke again he thought he heard the heavy rain pattering on the shingle roof at home. It was the clatter of vehicles on the street. The dissolution caused a pang. He jumped up resolutely and quickly dressed himself.

When he came to the table the mistress told him that her husband had been out with the boys during the night and had come home with "a lark in his head," but that he was a good man, and he need have no fear of him.

Paddy entered the room as Charles was leaving the table, and walking directly to Charles he extended his hand very familiarly.

"Well, be the rivers! Here's me young country lad the missus has been talkin' about. I'll give ye me word of honor that we will use ye alright—use ye like our own son. Come, now, shake hands wid me."

Charles extended his hand and Paddy gave it a hearty shake.

"Now, me son," said he, "ye will till all the bosses in the city that ye live wid us, an' that they must rispect ye an' not abuse ye. Now mark me word."

Charles left the house and walked briskly towards the stable.

"Is this city life?" said he to himself. But reflecting he thought, "I must not judge too hastily. It is as unfair to judge the entire city by some people living here as to judge the country by some of the people who are living there."

CHAPTER VII

WORKING ON A CITY JOB

"HEY, country!" cried Mr. Larkins as Charles approached the stable. "I feared that you would not come, but I see that you are true to your word anyway."

"I promised to come, and here I am, sir, ready for work," answered Charles quietly.

"I want you to help get this team ready, and then you'll accompany the driver on his rounds to-day. The horses are young an' skittish, an' he may need some one to help him to manage them."

Charles helped to get the team ready and then went with the driver to the ware-house, where he came in contact with the clerks, who had some good-natured fun at his expense. His odd dress did not fail to attract their attention.

"Oh, here is a greeny," said one of them as Charles and several men were loading the wagon. "When did you land?"

"Last evening," answered Charles pleasantly, "and thought I would call to see you at once."

"That is right," said one. Then he added, "On what boat did you come over?"

"On no boat. I walked across," answered Charles as he clambered spryly on the wagon and took his seat

by the side of the driver. "When I go back I'll take you with me," he added with a merry twinkle in his eye.

This remark caused a hearty laugh at the expense of the clerk.

"Not so green after all," cried several of the men, slapping their comrade familiarly on the shoulder. "No doubt he'll take you by the collar and help you along when he returns."

The team went along at a rapid rate. The driver was well acquainted in the city and frequently pointed to objects of interest as they passed along the street.

"Now," said he as he held his horses in, "we are entering Broadway. This is the finest street in the city."

Charles was very much embarrassed as he looked sheepishly from one side of the street to the other.

"I was on this street last evening," he said.

They now drove up Broadway. The street was crowded with pedestrians and vehicles. All were in a hurry.

"Oh, do you see that?" cried the driver to Charles. "We will have an ac—"; but before he could finish speaking his team collided with another team which was coming down the street. One of the horses became entangled in the harness of another horse and was thrown heavily on the roadbed. This stopped all traffic for some time and for some distance along the street.

"A runaway! A runaway! Police! Police!" resounded in all directions. Two policemen were attracted by the noise and confusion and rushed to the place. They found the fallen horse struggling to flee himself. The driver whom Charles accompanied was sitting on the wagon holding the reins, while Charles was trying to release the fallen horse.

"Sit on his head, young man, and hold him down," cried a man who was keeping at a safe distance.

"Hold him by the bit or he'll get away from you," cried another.

"Don't let him get up, young man! We are all in danger! He'll smash everything!" cried another who was trying to shelter himself behind a lamp-post.

No sooner was the horse released than Charles sprang to his seat on the wagon, the driver drew up the reins, and the horses again dashed off at full speed to the astonishment of all.

"These people were all full of advice, but they kept at a safe distance," said Charles smilingly. Then after a moment's thought he added: "Yesterday that young policeman—"

"Oho! these policemen are always slow. They are only on time when they can 'run a fellow in' and gouge him out of a day's wages."

Charles nodded.

"I am glad they were slow this time," said Charles to himself in an undertone.

"Well! Well!" cried one of the policemen to his friend, "my bird has flown."

"What bird?" questioned his astonished friend.

"The young fellow who sprang on the wagon a few moments ago, of course. He is the very boy for whom I am looking."

"Why did you not apprehend him?"

"Simply because I did not recognize him until too late. Yesterday I arrested him and some old Colonel by mistake for making a disturbance in the street. After I had both in the office of the magistrate the young fellow gave us the slip. No sooner had he left than the old fellow got on his high horse and made a great ado about him. In fact, he ordered me to go on the street and, if possible, apprehend him."

"Would there be any pay in it for you in case you would apprehend him?" questioned his friend.

"Oh, certainly! I—"

"Too bad that you are out of the money. I know you need it. Well, in fact, we all do. I—"

"But I am not out of it. I got it in advance. I tell you, he was good pay."

"Oh, well, that is another thing. Then you don't need to worry about it."

"But, understand, there is a bonus in it still."

"Please, sir, give me a few coppers to buy some bread for my poor children. They had nothing to eat today. We are really starving," said a poor, ragged woman, extending her hand to a passer-by as Charles alighted from the wagon in front of a large and extensive store.

The man made an impolite answer and passed on. Her pleading was too much for the kind-hearted Charles. He thrust his hand into his pocket and drew forth the few coppers he had left and handed them to the poor woman.

"Oh, thank ye! Thank ye!" cried the woman with tears rolling down her cheecks. "God will reward you for your kindness some time."

"What are you doing?" said the driver gruffly to Charles.

"I gave the poor woman a few coppers to buy bread with," answered Charles, quietly.

"You ain't that much of a—" He was going to say fool, but seeing the blood rush to Charles' forehead, he did not say the word. But after a few moments' pause he added: "You must not throw away your money on these people in the city. You are too foolish. Keep it in your pocket and have a good time with it yourself."

"It's gone, and that is all. I hope she will make good use of it," said Charles, as he turned away.

"Well, mind what I tell you. You will not have much money in your pocket if you keep up in this way."

"It does not make much difference. I don't have much money in my pocket at any rate. I hope she will buy some bread with it."

The driver curled his lip contemptuously, but said nothing.

At the time Charles Moser was congratulating himself on having eluded the policeman and was gazing

on the wonders of New York City, Colonel Musser was on a boat which was plying the majestic Hudson between New York City and Albany. He was getting nearer and nearer to his home and farther and farther away from the metropolis and the then unfortunate Charles. The Colonel had regained his natural buoyancy of spirit and readily mingled with the merry makers as they were distributed along the deck in groups indulging in all kinds of innocent amusements.

Attired in a fine suit of clothes, a high stand-up collar and a silk hat, he was a striking figure among the passengers. He frequently made use of the cane by pointing at some object of interest along the river. He wittily related some amusing war anecdotes—how he had taken out his regiment to "drum up Mexicans," as they called it; how the Mexicans had almost surrounded his regiment, and how they had to flee for their lives and save themselves by wading and swimming through an old canal which the Mexicans had treacherously filled with water.

"Who is that well-dressed old gentleman? He seems to consider himself a great man," said a bystander sneeringly to his friend. I think—"

"He is a great man," said his friend. "He was a Colonel in the war between Mexico and the United States, and is now a member of Congress. He lives in the Mohawk Valley, where he owns vast estates."

"Was he really a Colonel in the army?"

"Yes, and was considered one of the bravest officers in the entire army. He feared nothing. Some-

COLONEL MUSSER.

times he was considered rash, but he was always kind and considerate to his men."

The army to which Colonel Musser's regiment belonged at one time received a severe check at a high hill overlooking a wide plain. The commanding officer rode to the place where Colonel Musser's regiment lay behind some shelter and in an excited manner cried: "Colonel Musser, you must take that battery at all hazards." Colonel Musser took in the situation at a glance.

" 'I fear it is impossible, but I will try if you will order another regiment to the support of my regiment.'

" 'Certainly,' said the commanding officer, 'I will do so at once.'

"Colonel Musser immediately rode to the front of his regiment. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'we must take that battery. All cowards will step ten paces to the rear.' No one stepped to the rear. Then he gave the command: 'Gentlemen, follow me.' But no man moved. He then turned fiercely on his men. 'Are you all cowards and will not follow me?' he cried.

" 'Colonel Musser to the rear! Colonel Musser to the rear!' shouted the men.

"Seeing that it was useless for him to insist upon being at the front of the regiment, he rode to the rear and gave the command to move. The entire regiment moved as one man, and the battery was taken with a rush. At the moment of victory an officer informed Colonel Musser of the death of his son, an only child,

who was an aide to one of the officers in the army. From that moment the Colonel was a changed man. He retired from the army and—"

"Poor man!" said his friend, interrupting him. "I pity him from the bottom of my heart."

"Man overboard! Man overboard!" now rang loud and clear in the air, and instantly the peaceful and pleasant scene on deck was changed to one of excitement and confusion.

Colonel Musser, despite his years, was one of the coolest men on the boat. Instantly he was on his feet. Not reflecting that he was a passenger and not a commander, he sang out in stentorian tones: "Men, lower the life-boat and save that child. You will be well paid for your trouble."

The men needed no one to urge them on in their duty. The boat was lowered, the child rescued and placed in its mother's arms.

The frantic woman leaped for joy.

"Oh, what shall I do with you, my darling child?" she cried as she covered her son's face with kisses.

Colonel Musser could not restrain himself.

"Give him to me," he cried, "if you don't know what to do with him."

The boat resumed its course and in due time it reached Albany. The Colonel and his wife bade adieu to their friends, passed through the crowd, boarded one of the lumbersome stage coaches and were soon on their way to their distant home.

Charles attended to his work and gave satisfaction. He frequently accompanied other men with their teams. The days and weeks dragged slowly along, and seemed like ages to him. He was often annoyed and sometimes amused at the overseer, who was very outspoken and careless in his speech.

During the evenings Charles had ample time to do some errands for his boarding mistress, who took great delight in him and frequently called him her son. When he got tired of studying he would sit by the window and while the time away or take a walk to some distant part of the city.

But one day he had a sad mishap. He was savagely attacked and seriously hurt by a vicious horse.

"You would better summon the ambulance," said the doctor to the overseer, "and take him to the hospital; better move him as soon as possible."

Charles lay pale and limp on the bench before the stable, where they had placed him. Sad memories passed before his mind's eye, for he now realized that he was far away from home and among strangers.

Presently he heard some one speaking near him.

"An' what are ye goin' to take 'im to the 'ospital fer? Is my 'ouse not good enough fer 'im?"

It was the familiar voice of his boarding mistress, who had just heard of the accident.

"The boy is seriously hurt and may be confined to his bed for a long time," whispered the doctor. "Better take him to the hospital," he added after a short pause. "He will need the very best of nursing, or he may not recover."

"Nary a bit!" cried Mrs. Newell as she saw Charles' longing look. "The lad will be taken to my 'ouse. He will git all the nursing Paddy an' I can give him."

"The wounds that we see are not dangerous—not dangerous at all, but you see he may be hurt internally, and he may have very few chances to recover if he does not have the very best nursing."

"Fiddle sticks!" cried Mrs. Newell. "He is not hurt infernally. I know that much meself. He'll be aroun' in a short time. It's Paddy an' meself that will attend to him."

The doctor tried to persuade Mrs. Newell to have Charles removed to the hospital, but the boarding mistress was obstinate, and Charles was taken to her house.

"Ho, doc! Going to stop here?" said a man on meeting the doctor in front of Mrs. Newell's house in the evening.

"Yes," snapped the doctor.

"Any one sick?"

"Young man was hurt very badly this morning, and I must see that he is well taken care of," he said, twisting his eyebrows in a meaning way.

"Man from the city?"

"Came to the city not long ago."

"And lives here?"

"He boards here."

"Is he in for a long spell?"

"Don't know. May be hurt internally and may have a short spell. He should have been taken to the

hospital for proper nursing, as I suggested, but his boarding mistress made a great howl about it, and so he was taken to her house," said the doctor as he removed his hat and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"How is the young man?" snapped the doctor rather unceremoniously when Mrs. Newell opened the door.

"An' sure, he's better."

"You think he is?"

"Sure," she replied, "I know—"

"Yes, you know all about it," said the doctor to himself in an undertone. Then he added in a louder tone: "Understand, this is no play business. He needs good care; and if you want to keep him here, then you must—" He stopped a moment and then added, "He should have been taken to the hospital. But—"

"Yes, taken to the 'ospital. I would like to know what fer!" So saying she led the doctor to the room where Charles was lying pale and haggard on a snow-white bed, Paddy Newell sitting by his side holding a piece of ice to the wound with one hand, while in the other hand he held a handkerchief and was mopping the tears from his own cheeks.

"Be patient," said the doctor, consoling Paddy; "he is strong, and with good nursing and proper care he may be out of bed in several months' time. I do not think that he is hurt internally."

"Och, doc," said Mrs. Newell, "I knew you were in the wind with that game."

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPELLING-BEE

MARY, prettily though inexpensively dressed, was anxiously awaiting the coming of Charles Moser. She wondered at his non-appearance all the more because special interest was attached to this spelling-bee.

It was to be a contest between two rival schools, and excitement ran high in the community. For days fond mothers and fathers had assisted their aspiring children in spelling and in searching the dictionary for the most difficult words.

When the time for opening the spelling-bee arrived, the teacher rose and called the meeting to order by tapping a small bell. He then appointed a lady and gentleman for judges.

Two captains were chosen, and they promptly took their respective places on the platform. The captain representing the school to which Charles belonged immediately called the name of "Charles Moser," but he failed to respond to his name.

This caused a ripple of laughter amongst the members of the opposing school. Eager eyes searched the audience for him, but he could not be found. He had never deserted his fellow-spellers, and why should he leave them in the lurch at the present time? No one

could account for it. His friends, however, assured everyone that something unusual must have occurred or he would be present. Nothing else could have prevented him from being there. Perhaps he was sick. Who could tell?

The teacher, a tall, cadaverous native of one of the eastern states, a Yale graduate, sat at his desk with dictionary and spelling book before him ready for work.

He was unusually well qualified for the profession he had chosen, and the people were not slow to recognize the fact. Several prominent men, some of whom were present, sent their sons and daughters to this representative teacher, gladly paying a specified sum over and above the stipulated salary.

A gentleman arose and suggested that there be no contest between the schools that evening. No objection was made to the suggestion, and the two captains made their selections from the audience, not caring from which school they selected the spellers.

After several friendly contests other modes were adopted. Anyone in the audience could challenge a rival speller. This mode occasioned a great deal of merriment, since it gave the contestants ample opportunity to take advantage of one another's weaknesses, and to display their wit and sense of humor.

Things went on happily amongst these rustic lads and lassies. But all this time Jim DeStay and his pals sat in one of the rear seats, where Jim, in spite of his bruised nose and black eye, exhibited his skill by drawing a black man with horns on his head and a pitchfork in his hands.

Bob Fratinger, a tall, lanky fellow, arose.

"What now?" cried some of the curious.

"Listen and you will hear," answered his friends.

Bob Fratinger looked over the audience and in a loud mocking voice called out: "I challenge Charles Moser."

There was no response, and Bob became braver; and raising his voice to still a higher pitch, he repeated his challenge.

The audience, eagerly expectant at first, hoping perhaps that Charles would yet appear, now saw through his artifice and rose in a tumult. Bob seeing the sensation he was creating, triumphantly shouted: "I challenge—"

But he was not given the opportunity to finish the challenge, for Regina, the witch, remembering former occasions on which Charles Moser had measured swords with Bob Fratinger and had come out victorious, could not bear the taunts and sneers on Charles.

Springing to her feet she transfixed him with her black eyes, and, pointing a long, bony finger at him, cried: "You are very anxious to meet Charles Moser bein' you know he isn't here. You needn't feel so sorry. You met him before, an'—"

The rest was drowned in a storm of applause. Those who had remained outside engaged in trading knives and similar enterprises, crowded to the windows and door to learn the cause of the excitement. Bob sat down completely vanquished.

Jim DeStay pretended to enjoy the fun, but he felt very ill at ease. The fear that Charles Moser was ser-

iously injured tortured him to such an extent that the mention of his name pierced his very soul.

The spelling-bee came to an end. The young and light-hearted met each other at the open door. All was sunshine in their merry hearts. The moon and stars shone down on them as they joyfully wended their way homeward arm in arm. The lofty oak and chestnut trees swayed in the moonlight and the little rills rippled and laughed merrily as they danced along over their silvery beds.

"And all went merry as a marriage bell."

The strange disappearance of Charles Moser was duly discussed on the way home. Regina, the witch, had a share of the talk. She was out of humor, and did not hesitate to have her say.

"There is some trouble somewhere," she said, "an' I will find it out; sure an' I will. He is the only decent young man aroun' here. He will not sit in the back seat in a spellin' match an' draw foolish pictures or be outside tradin' knives—not he."

Others were of the same opinion as Regina, and expressed themselves just as freely.

Jim heard all the remarks made in reference to Charles' non-appearance, and knew that most people feared Regina on account of the weird power attributed to her, and he felt very uneasy.

"Does she really know all about Charles? Can she tell who killed him if he is dead?" These and similar questions flitted through his mind.

When Regina stopped at her home, he drew close to her. "Well, mammy," he said, sarcastically, "this

was a nice trick of Charles Moser this evening. He should not have left our school stick in the mud like this. Why didn't he show himself a man an' go up an' spell, if he wants to be such a splendid speller?"

"Why didn't you go up an' spell?" she queried.

"Oh, I am no good speller. I'm—"

"You are good at makin' pictures."

Jim was sorely perplexed. How did she know he was making pictures, for he was sure she had not seen him?

He felt rather sheepish as he drew up close to her.

"I wonder where Charles Moser is?" he ventured to say.

"I think you ought to know. You—"

Jim skulked back into the crowd without waiting for the completion of the reply, and did not molest her that evening. He did not sleep well during the night, for the form of Charles was continually before him. His guilty conscience had played havoc with his nerves.

The next day, though still uneasy in mind, he summoned sufficient courage to visit the place where he and his pals had given Charles the beating, hoping to assure himself of Charles' fate.

As he neared the spot, he saw an object moving about. He drew still closer. To his horror it was Regina, the witch.

"What is she doin' here?" he muttered to himself. "Does she know what has happened, or is she on her way to Charles' mother?"

A demon possessed him. Were he not so superstitious, he would have rushed upon her and strangled her then and there.

"If she is a witch, I can not harm her, but she can surely harm me," he argued with himself. So he skulked off, unnoticed, as he thought, without molesting her, while she continued on her way.

"There comes Regina," said Mrs. Moser to her daughter as she saw her coming round the house and past the window where she stood. "I wonder what she wants?" she added in a low tone, for by this time Regina was near the kitchen door.

"Oh, she has some news again," said Alberta pettishly. "She is always busy carrying news."

Regina took a seat, and as she did so, gazed intently at Mrs. Moser. She noticed that her eyes were red from weeping, and she immediately came to the conclusion that Charles was the cause. But she had concocted a story, and she was ready to begin as soon as an opportunity was afforded her. But Mrs. Moser was not anxious to converse with her, and so she had to begin herself.

"Well," she said by way of introduction, "the match came near endin' in a fight. I thinked everythin' would go to smash."

"What match?" inquired Mrs. Moser.

"The spellin' match, of course! You know nothin'? Why, you see, Bob Fratinger he was there an' he kicked up a fuss with Charlie."

"Kicked up a fuss with Charlie?" said Mrs. Moser, fearing that some bodily harm had been done him. "Charlie would not get into a fight with anyone."

"Sich is the like! You never knowed about it! I declare! But I just up an' tole him somethin', an' he sat right down an' never sayed another word, not he."

"Charlie in a fight with Bob Fratinger!" cried Mrs. Moser, thoroughly alarmed. "It is impossible; he will not fight with anyone," continued she.

"No fight. Charlie wasn't there."

"But you said Bob Fratinger kicked up a fight with him."

"So I did, but Charlie wasn't there. Don't yer see, that great big Bob Fratinger he strutted up on the platform just so big an' challenged him to—"

"To fight!" cried Mrs. Moser and Alberta in unison.

"La, no! To spell. An' Charlie was not there, an' they all laughed, an' he feel so big."

"Was Mary there?" asked Mrs. Moser eagerly.

"No, she wasn't there either."

"Then Charlie is down at Mr. Brown's place," said Mrs. Moser to Alberta in an undertone. "Just what I thought," she added after a moment's pause.

Mrs. Moser was worried about Charles. She now felt certain that he had gone over to the Browns to live and that he and Mary would be married in the near future. Mingled with her misgivings for the future were regrets for her hasty words to Charles concerning his intentions towards Mary. Gentle persua-

sions, a setting forth of the misery he would cause herself would have brought him to a sense of his duty towards her.

Regina saw the perplexed look on Mrs. Moser's face and overhearing the remark, said to herself in an undertone: "There is somethin' wrong here. What should he be doin' at Mr. Brown's place? I will find it out—sure I will." Then unconsciously she spoke in a louder tone: "N-n-n, what shall I say about this if anyone asts me?"

"'What shall you say?'" said Mrs. Moser, giving her a withering glance. "No one wants you to say anything about it. There will be enough talk about it."

"N-n-n, well, I did not mean to say anythin' out of the house about it, but—"

"Yes, but you wanted to know what you should say—"

"La, no, Mrs. Moser," said Regina, interrupting, for she considered that she had made a mistake in speaking. "I—"

"Well, I think the less you have to say about it, the better."

With these last remarks the conversation referring to Charles Moser was temporarily dropped between Mrs. Moser and Regina for the present time.

CHAPTER IX

REGINA CALLS ON MARY.

"Old Smut," the home of Regina, the soothsayer, and her husband, stood in a barren, rocky hollow by the side of the road leading from the river to Gap Bach. The dilapidated old cabin itself and the occupants thereof were not overly clean, which may have been the cause of the odd name.

The place was frequented by young men of the neighborhood, who spent the time in drinking, smoking, playing cards and listening to Regina's weird stories which she related to them as she sat before the hearth knitting and smoking her old clay pipe.

There was unusual excitement in her mind, for she could not forget the conversation she had had with Mrs. Moser the previous day. Besides, she was in need of money, and she felt certain that if she would manage well she could make a little out of the present trouble. In her musings she frequently thought she heard footsteps as of someone approaching the door. Her husband was lying on the bench near the hearth covering his face with his hands as if trying to evade the invectives she was hurling at him, but all in vain.

She was quiet for some time, but then again her ill nature urged her on.

"I think, old man, it's about time fer me to be goin' to the store, or we will not have anythin' to eat

fer supper. Can't ye give me a quarter?" she cried, arousing him from his stupor.

The old man thrust his hands into his pockets and fumbled around for some time.

"Can't ye give me a quarter?" she again cried.

"Not one cent," the old man answered.

Regina cast her black eyes on him. She felt like flying on him in her rage.

"Yes, it is the same old story. No money an' nothin' to eat. I must soon be goin' and beggin'," she again cried, raising her voice to a higher pitch.

Her husband made no reply. It was the best he could do so as to avoid trouble. He was old and feeble and unable to work. In his younger days he would not work, and now the support of both devolved on his wife. He could not blame her for being in a rage sometimes.

After a few moments' silence she again shrieked: "I must be gettin' sumthin' fer supper. I see it's no use of waiting fer ye to git it. The dogs might starve afore ye would git somethin' fer us to eat."

The old man rose from the bench, put his hands to his back and hobbled to a chair.

"What's the matter wid ye, anyway? Are ye drunk agin?" asked Regina in her sarcastic way.

"Oh, it's me back that's hurtin'."

"Ye must not be lyin' on that old bench all day long. No wonder yer back's hurtin'. Move 'roun' a little, an' ye will git better."

"It's not much," replied her husband, who did not like the taunts she frequently cast at him.

"Well, I must be goin'. Be keerful wid the house," said his wife, after placing her turban on her head and throwing her old shawl over her shoulders.

"Niver fear. It will be alright when ye come home. I'll take good keer of it," answered her husband uneasily.

"Well, remember what ye say, an' be keerful an' do so," cried his wife in a surly manner.

Regina moved towards the door to pass out of the house; but as she did so, the door opened, and before her stood Jim DeStay.

"Well, well! Howdy, howdy, Jim! Glad to see yer. Very glad to see yer," said Regina, smiling pleasantly. "Come in an' take a cheer. It's a long time since ye ware here, but I knew ye would come afore long. How's that wart on yer han'? It's goin' away; never fear. Ef yer will ever git another wart on yer han', then just do the same thin'."

"What's good for a bruise?" said Jim, at the same time turning his face directly towards her.

"Hol'a rotton apple on it picked up under a tree in the mornin' afore yer speak a word to anyone, an' then wash with stump water."

Stump water was Regina's great cure for all ailments. She was in the habit of saying: "It worked in my old home. Why should it not work here?"

"Yer see, Jim," she continued after a short pause, "I am none of yer wise doctors, or I would do as they

do. They would take a sharp knife an' make a 'cission right in that spot," indicating it with her finger, "an' ef it would take out the eye."

Jim made no objections to Regina's mode of treatment. He was willing to do anything that would remove the black spot encircling his eye and relieve him from the pain in his nose.

Jim was very nervous, and Regina did not fail to notice it. He walked back and forth in the room, occasionally stopping in front of Regina as if to say something to her.

"Yer some uneasy, Jim. What's the trouble?" said she after a moment's pause.

Jim made no immediate reply to her question. He walked to the window and looked out over the garden in the rear of the house.

Regina lit her pipe and moved closer to him, at the same time transfixing him with her black eyes.

"No one is nigh, Jim," said she, noticing that he hesitated to speak.

At last Jim spoke in a low voice, while he was trembling with fear.

"Can you really tell what has happened?" he said.

Regina now felt certain that Jim had committed some crime; that he was in trouble, and that she could realize something by assisting or pretending to assist him. She again glanced at him. Those small, black beady eyes pierced his very soul.

"Why should I not? Everythin' that I predic' comes true."

Jim again looked out of the window to make sure no one was near. Regina followed his movements with her eyes. She chuckled to herself, for she knew that she had him in her power and could make some money out of him by playing her game well.

He had barely begun relating the story of Charles' beating, when it dawned on Regina's mind that he had received the black eye and bruised nose through an encounter with Charles.

"Oho ! an' yer got a black eye an' a smashed nose," cried Regina, shaking with laughter, for she was really not a friend of Jim.

Jim did not like her taunt.

"Yes, b-u-t h-e go-t as m-u-c-h o-f a—"

"Yes, but there were three of ye, an' he was only one," again cried Regina, interrupting him.

Jim related the story entirely.

"He is not dead," said Regina, shaking her head knowingly.

Jim's heart gave a bound for joy, for he feared that Charles was dead.

He now handed Regina some money, and she promised to ascertain the whereabouts of Charles. The shrewd old woman pretended to consider it a very serious affair.

"Are these all the fac's?" said she after considering some time.

Jim answered they were.

No sooner had Jim left the house, then Regina looked at the coin and then at her husband.

"It pays well to play this game. I must go to Mary Brown an' find out if Charlie Moser is there. I will git some more outen this. Min' what I tell ye," she said as she laughed heartily.

"Well, Mary, working all the time, day an' night," said Regina as she entered the kitchen, where Mary was sitting.

"Not all the time," answered Mary in a low tone of voice without looking up.

Regina was wise enough to notice that she was not a welcome visitor, and she immediately turned her attention to Bessie, who was near by.

"Come to me, my little gal," said she to Bessie, at the same time extending her long, bony arms towards her.

But Bessie stared wildly at Regina and retreated to Mary's side.

"Come to me, my little gal, an' I will hol' yer."

"I am not your little girl," answered Bessie, at the same time retreating behind Mary's chair.

"Oh, come to me," said Regina in a begging tone. "I will not harm yer."

"No, I won't," said Bessie, still keeping near Mary.

"Bessie, you must not talk that way. It is very naughty to talk that way," cautioned Mary.

"What a purty little gal," said Regina. "See what nice, rosy cheeks and blue eyes she has."

"Bessie is a very naughty little girl. She is teased too much, and is really getting very saucy. I do not know what to do with her."

This afforded a chance for Regina to speak to Mary, and she immediately grasped the opportunity.

"N-n-n, well," she mumbled through the nose, "'yer makin' a dress. Where—"

"It is my dress," cried Bessie, interrupting, and Mary failed to answer.

"Oh, yer don't say! Are yer sure it is yer dress? I thinked it was Mary's wedding dress," said Regina, casting a glance at Mary.

"It is my dress. Mary makes it for me. I will put it on next Sunday to go to church."

"Oh, no, little gal. You're mistaken. I guess it's Mary's wedding dress."

Mary pretended not to understand Regina, and she made no reply.

"Yer did not understand me," said Regina, addressing Mary. "I said—"

"What should I want a wedding dress for?" interrupted Mary. "I—"

"You should know," interrupted Regina.

"But I don't know."

Regina considered for a moment; then, gathering courage, she blurted out: "Mary, where is Charlie?"

"Charlie!" cried Mary in surprise. "I am sure I don't know."

"Don't yer know?"

"Why should I know? What has happened?" cried Mary almost in one breath, at the same time thinking about Jim DeStay and his pals, and the warning she had given to Charles.

Regina judged well the cause of Mary's excitement. She knew that Mary always feared that some harm would come to him, and that her fears were well founded. She was silent several moments, then she answered: "Charlie isn't at home, an' I thinked he ware here."

"He is not here. It is several days since I saw him last. Did he not reach his home the other evening?"

Regina did not wish to answer this question, so she said: "He an' his mother had a quarrel about yer. Charlie left home, an' his mother thinked he ware here."

"A quarrel about me? What reason had they to quarrel about me? I never did Charlie's mother any harm."

"Yer see, Charlie's mother always thinked ye too young to git married, an' she tole—"

"Too young to get married!" cried Mary, rising from her chair and interrupting her, for she was greatly excited.

"Yes, too young—"

"Who said we were going to get married?" interrupted Mary.

"Charlie's mother heard so," answered Regina.

"But who told her?"

"I—I don't know."

"I am certain that I see the hand of Jim DeStay in this trouble. The—"

"Mary, please," implored her father, who had so far listened in silence.

But Mary was excited and did not heed his warning, and she cried out: "Papa, Jim's father is well secured for all the money you owe him. I owe nothing to Jim. I am not included in that mortgage."

These words were hastily spoken, as she found to her sorrow years afterwards.

The matter was somewhat complicated, even for the shrewd old witch. She knew that she had talked too much, and she was very much embarrassed. Mary was always kind to her, and she really felt very uneasy about the part she was playing against her. But she needed the money, and what act of meanness would she not do to accomplish her end.

Regina glanced at Mary and saw how wretched she was, and she pitied her. She placed one hand over her eyes, while she fumbled with her dress with the other hand. She sat in this position for some time as if meditating. She now believed that Charles had left the place and she could gain another point in her scheme.

"Mary," she said, "Charlie went away. I know it; but do not fear, I will bring him back to ye again."

"What!" cried Mary in astonishment, "you bring him back to me. Do you think that I believe in such foolishness as that? Never!"

Regina was beaten at her own game. She was playing a double game, but she failed, at least with Mary.

CHAPTER X

JIM DESTAY CALLS ON REGINA

REGINA delivered her message to Jim. But to keep in his graces and derive still more profits from him through her craft, she put an entirely different version on the conversation she had had with Mary.

"Is Charlie there?"

"N-n, no, he is not."

"Is that really so?"

Regina nodded her head."

"Then he is at home."

"Charlie went away, I tell yer."

"Are yer sure?" queried Jim, still doubting.

"I am sure; I tole yer so before," answered Regina indignantly.

"Is Mary cross?" asked Jim after considering some time.

"N-n, no; she does not seem to be cross."

Jim was highly elated over the good news, as he termed it, and inwardly resolved to call on Mary as soon as his eye and nose were in proper condition for him to meet her.

About two weeks later his trial came. For one morning, after spending considerable time on his toilet and taking a good survey of himself in a pocket

looking-glass, which always accompanied him wherever he went, he resolved to go forth on his venturous mission.

Mary, as usual, was engaged in her simple household duties when Jim entered the yard. Her thoughts, as ever since his disappearance, were with her faithless lover. Presently she thought that she heard sounds of footsteps outside, and seemed to recognize the firm, energetic gait of Charles. Her heart almost ceased beating, and hope and happiness, which seemed quite dead only a moment before, instantly sprang to life again.

"How I will tease him about his running away," she thought as she walked to the door, her face all radiant with happiness. But she was doomed to direst disappointment, for instead of Charles' manly face and figure, the dissipated countenance of Jim DeStay was directly before her.

Hope and happiness fled from her, and disgust and resentment toward her lover's enemy took their place, and deny as she would a vague fear—a feeling that he intended to harm and humiliate her and would some day accomplish it—also claimed a spot in her heart.

Half sheepishly, half insolently Jim DeStay stood in the door-way awaiting an invitation to enter.

Since none was forthcoming, he crossed the threshold.

"Well, Mary," he said, smiling. "I will come into the house an' if yer don't like it."

Mary made no reply.

Jim fixed his evil eyes on her as he seated himself on the wood-chest. He was smitten in his guilty conscience. As he sat pondering, he frequently patted with one hand a small bundle he had lying by his side. A cowardly fear was in his heart, for might not Charles Moser be concealed somewhere in the house?

Mary's face was clouded and she refrained from speaking to him. She continued at her work, at the same time slyly watching his actions.

Feeling uncomfortable and miserable, he bowed his head and unconsciously began to whistle in a low tone. He stretched his benumbed hands towards the heated stove and rubbed them briskly. He hesitated and showed signs of confusion. At last he took courage to speak.

"I don't want ter disturb yer," said he, "but I thought I would call an' see how ye all ware."

"It is kind of you to call on us so frequently," replied Mary. "You must be very much interested in us."

Jim was uneasy by this time, and began to walk back and forth. He stared blankly at her. The blood rushed to his temples. He was in a bad humor. He had never thought that she would answer him in such an uncivil way. How would she dare to do it—she a poor girl and he a rich man's son? He felt the sting in her words, but he was not so easily shaken in his determination, and he ventured forth again.

"Well, Mary," he said, "yer missed the spellin'-match tother evening'. Yer a fine girl, I dare say.

Why didn't yer come? We ware all waitin' fer yer a long time."

"I did not wish to come," answered Mary in an undertone, at the same time resuming her work.

"There was a large crowd in the school-house an' lots of fun. Bob Fratinger challenged Charlie Moser to spell, but Charlie didn't come out to spell," he said with a sarcastic smile.

"Bob Fratinger! Did he want to be beaten again?" queried Mary. "I thought he was satisfied by this time."

"Oh, I tell yer it was fun. They all laughed when Charlie didn't come out to spell."

"Did they all laugh?"

"Well—no—but most of 'em."

"Then the foolish only laughed? Did you laugh too?"

This last thrust went pretty deep, but Jim continued unabashed, and he said: "Why didn't yer come an' bring Charlie with yer?"

"He did not ask me to bring him. Don't you think he can take care of himself?"

"Oh, well—I—I don't know."

"You ought to know by this time."

That answer came nearer home. In fact, Jim felt quite certain that Mary referred to the encounter Charles had had with him and his pals.

"W-h-e-r-e is Charlie?" stammered Jim.

"Don't you know?" said Mary, resuming her work.

"No, I—I—don't," stammered Jim.

"You should know. You are always very much interested in him."

"There," thought Jim, "she knows all about it. Either Charlie is here or that old witch has told her what happened that evening."

But it was no use for Jim to shirk then, even if he felt disposed to do so, and with a stubbornness born of awkwardness rather than courage he still clung to his subject, saying: "He's a nice fellow goin' away an' not tellin' yous where he's goin'."

"Do you think he is worse than others who went away without telling where they were going?" said Mary mockingly.

Mary's loyalty to Charles Moser, as well as the undisguised dislike of Jim, infuriated him and made him all the more determined to humiliate Charles in Mary's estimation.

"I always had no too good opinion of him. He put on too much airs fer me. Yer see he was always kinder stuck up."

"He always bore a good reputation, did he not?"

Jim squirmed under this question. He paused, but again led on the unequal contest by turning to another subject.

"I allers thought he was a little lodge and church cranky," said he after considering several moments.

"A little lodge and church cranky!"

"Yes, he allers ware."

"I know that you are not church cranky, but were you never lodge cranky?"

This was a question that Jim did not wish to answer. He hesitated some time, but finally answered: "I allers thought there was a great deal of foolishness about it. People say they have a lot of secrets which none besides themselves dare know."

"Do you tell all your secrets?" queried Mary, looking sternly at him.

Jim made no immediate answer. He had never heard Mary speak so insultingly to anyone before. He felt that he had lost, and was at least a good loser. With his natural awkwardness, enhanced by his defeat and Mary's contempt, the result could not be otherwise than disastrous to his desires, even if Mary loathed him a good deal less than she did.

"Mary," he said coaxingly, "yer must not be so cross at me. Yer must not blame me for Charlie's running away. I think myself it is a mean trick." He stopped, stroked his hair and shrugged his shoulders, and then moved towards her.

"Mary," he continued, "I like—no—yes, I like yer, I like yer better than any other girl I ever knowed. I will build a nice house, and will give yer a good home, if yer will marry me and—"

Mary shrank away from him as if struck a blow. She could not find words to express her feelings, and she turned away from him with contempt.

"I will never be your drudge," she said.

"Now, Mary, you must not be so cross. I am the best friend you have. You know that my father holds those notes against your—"

"Oh, you mean that mortgage," said Mary, interrupting. "He holds no mortgage against me."

It now became plain to even Jim's slow wits that his suit was doomed to failure, unless he could think of some more persuasive method of procedure. Angry with Mary, himself and the world at large, he left the house, muttering to himself: "By jingo, but she's stuck up; but I'll take some of that conceit out of her brain sometime, see if I don't."

Jim had the misfortune to meet Regina not far away from Mary's home. He now believed that she was playing a game, but he did not trust to accuse her of it.

Regina did not fail to notice the scowl on his face, but she was too wily to refer to it.

"Well, Jim, how are yer anyway this mornin'?" said she pleasantly.

"You tole me that Mary wasn't cross," said he in answer to her question.

"Mary isn't cross," said Regina with a surprised look on her countenance.

"Well, I guess she is. I was at her home just a short time ago, an' she was jumpin' mad, I tell yer. She—"

"Well, Jim, ye should not have gone there just now, I tell ye. She—"

"Yes, but ye tole me she wasn't mad."

"Yer up on yer ear a little, an' ye made a mistake by goin' there, but I tell yer I will git it alright if ye will stay away an' not 'noy her."

Jim doubted her word, but he did not trust to get into a quarrel with her, and she had her own way again.

CHAPTER XI

JIM PLANS MARY'S HUMILIATION

IT was a clear, frosty morning. "Old Levi," the peddler, with overcoat buttoned up to his chin and kid gloves on his hands, walked back and forth on the rickety old porch of the hotel whittling a stick and humming a tune. He had a lot of jewelry on hand and was eager for customers to buy it. He cast a glance down the road and recognized the awkward form of Jim DeStay in the distance as he came strolling up the road with a friend. Levi chuckled to himself. He had frequently sold rings and trinkets to him, and he was certain he could do so again.

"Howdy, Jim," said Levi, bowing low as Jim ascended the steps leading to the porch. "It is a fine morning, but a little chilly."

Jim skulked by without answering.

The ever-polite Levi was silent for a moment. He could not understand Jim. They were always good friends. Why should Jim shun him in this way?

"Howdy, Jim," said Levi, again extending his hand familiarly. "How are you to-day?"

Jim was ill at ease. He shrank from speaking and skulked to the other end of the porch. All was excitement by this time.

"Oh, ho, Jim!" cried his friends. "Yous are 'round bright an' early this mornin'."

Jim looked angrily at the speakers and did not answer.

"Jim, how's clubs an' spades? Let's have a game," said one, trying to humor him.

Card-playing was one of Jim's weaknesses. It was seldom that he could resist the temptation of a game of cards. He could play an entire day and night at other times without getting tired, but at present he was too much out of humor to join in a game.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said the over-polite Levi, interrupting. "I wish to speak with Jim. I know he wants to buy a ring for his lady. I will sell him a good ring. I will—"

"No, I don't want to buy a ring," answered Jim gruffly, interrupting him.

This created a laugh, and Levi cast a glance over the crowd, not understanding the cause of the mirth.

"Why don't you buy him out?" cried some one. "Yous can make lots of money on his stock."

"Well, Jim, wat's the matter on you anyway?" said Levi on seeing the scowl on his face. "Was I not always fair with you?"

"I have no money to buy with just now," said Jim pettishly.

"Oh, that makes no different. Your face was good. You can pay—"

"Yes, it does make a difference. Bills must be paid and—"

By this time Jim's friends had assembled around him. His adventure with Mary several days before

MARY BROWN.

had gone the rounds of the entire crowd, and eager for some more fun they tried to persuade him to come into the bar-room, but Jim was wary, and it required lots of coaxing to get him into the room.

"Boys," said some one trying to get Jim started, "Jim is now striking a bargain with Mr. Brown for his farm. He expects to go in the farming business, and you know—"

"What will Charlie Moser say to that?" cried the crowd in unison.

"Oh, Charlie is out in the cold now! What does Mary want with him after his running away? A nice trick of a young man like he wants to be, I dare say," some one averred.

"Bully for you, Jim. Stick to it. We are with you in this," cried the crowd, slapping him familiarly on the back.

Jim felt flattered by the interest his worthy friends took in his affairs, and in a short time became more talkative. Reclining in a chair tilted against the wall, with his feet resting on another chair, forgetting what little sense of the fitness of things he had ever possessed, he related his adventures with Mary to the boisterous crowd.

"Was she that mean, though?" said one after Jim had related the story.

"Yes, she was," said Jim as he clenched his fists and grit his teeth, "but I will make her bow that fine head of hern yit. See ef I don't. I'll git even with her some time. I'll larn her to talk decently to me."

"I'll tell yous what ter do. Yous go straight home to your pop an' git that mertgage he holds against Pete Brown, then yous can make them all skip," suggested one.

But the over-polite Levi, who stood back and listened to the story, thought differently. He worked himself through the crowd and touched Jim lightly on the shoulder.

"Jim," he said, "listen to me. Do no such thing." He fumbled with his watch-chain for a moment, then resumed his talk: "Never try to harm a woman. She will always git ahead of you. Take my word for it. She will always git ahead of you. I had experience in—well, never mind," he said to himself as he walked away from him.

But Jim would not take any advice. He had his own notions about affairs, and he resolved to stick to them. Soon he and his friends left for home. Their heads were heavy and frequently sought the places where their feet should have been.

The log across the creek was slippery from the late rain, and the party took an unexpected cooling in the creek. This called forth their wrath, and since nothing else was handy, they vented it upon the innocent piece of wood, casting it into the water for its punishment.

The undertaking caused the party to take a second bath; but finally accomplishing their object, they turned their wandering footsteps homeward.

Jim looked more like a drowned rat than a human being when he entered the house.

His mother was as usual busy in the kitchen, while his father sat in his favorite chair, his small, deep-set, black, beady eyes half closed, considering the possible profits of a loan he had made to one of his neighbors. He cast a side glance at Jim when that worthy entered, then closed them again in a feigned slumber.

"I dare say, pop," mumbled Jim, trying to retain his equilibrium in a chair which, curiously enough as he thought, persisted in rocking from one side to the other, "when yer goin' to collect that money from Pete Brown? It's erbout time to collect it, fer everythin' is goin' to smash there."

"Jim, we'll better wait some time yit," answered the father, suddenly wide awake.

Cony DeStay was a very crafty person. When he loaned money to his neighbors it was not out of pure charity and sympathy with their distress, as he wished to make them believe, nor for the interest accruing thereon (though that was not by any means to be despised), but mainly for the sake of the property on which the mortgage rested and which in most cases he managed to claim as his own by a well-timed foreclosure. He had similar designs upon the property of Pete Brown. He knew full well that the property was worth a good deal more than the mortgage he held against it, and upon the death of the owner, which he thought would not be far distant, it would be an easy matter to secure the property, for Mary Brown would never be able to pay the debt.

Jim DeStay was not content with the answer he had received from his father, for somehow the thought of taking revenge on Mary Brown always came top again in his sodden brain.

"Pop, I want that mertgage," he said, his head swaying dizzily.

Mrs. DeStay listened to the conversation as she passed to and fro in the kitchen.

"There," thought she, "Jim has been over to see Mary Brown and they had a quarrel, and now he seeks revenge on her. He wants to get that mortgage and, if she refuses to marry him, then he will sell the property and get her out of the house. I'll see about that."

Mrs. DeStay and Mary were good friends. Mary, motherless girl that she was, had often made a confidant of Mrs. DeStay, who knew among other things that she loved Charles Moser. She was not blinded to her son's follies and believed that he had caused the dissension between Charles and his mother.

Mr. DeStay was not troubled by any such sentimental scruples. What he wanted was the Brown homestead, and he meant to have it, but he must bide his time to make success a certainty. When, therefore, he answered Jim's request with the smiling face and soothing voice, saying: "You shall have it in a few days; then you can show it to Mary and perhaps you will be able to strike a bargain with her," he did not mean it.

Jim, drunk though he was, understood that perfectly and demanded: "Give it to me now, an' I will

show it to her an' she will know that she must be more sociable."

"Well, you may have it for a few days, Jim, and I'll see with what success you will meet," answered his father.

Mrs. DeStay understood the situation. "Do you intend to give that mertgage to Jim?" she asked.

Her husband seemed not to understand her. He stared blankly before him.

"Do you intend to give that mertgage to Jim and help him drive those poor people out of their house?" she demanded with emphasis.

Mr. DeStay squirmed uneasily. "Oh, I only thought—"

"You see what trick Jim is up to, and I believe you are aiding him," Mrs. DeStay interrupted.

Mr. DeStay was surprised. He shook his head. His wife had never interfered with any of his business transactions before; and though he was an unscrupulous scoundrel, he had a wholesome respect for her.

"I merely—" he began with uncertainty.

"Would you like to be guilty of assisting him to drive them out?" she interrupted.

"Why, no! I will give it to him for a few days only; and if he and Mary can strike a bargain on it, then they may have it for a present; if not, he will return it to me, and nothing more will be said about it."

Mrs. DeStay considered this a lame excuse for him to make.

"There is no bargain to be made on that mertgage. It belongs to me. Everything that is here belongs to me. I always left you have your own way in everything, but in this you shall not have your own way."

To hear his mother champion the cause of Mary Brown and oppose his own wild desires, was more than Jim could bear. Being in a drunken rage, he rose from his chair, rushed at her and tried to strike her. She dodged, however, and he struck into space, the force of the blow sending him flying against the wall behind her.

Mrs. DeStay was a very muscular woman. She caught him by the collar and hurled him back into the chair. "There, you young loafer," she said as she brandished a broom-stick over his head, "do not come near me again or I will use this broom-stick on you. You and your father plotted this trick against that family for some time, simply because that kind-hearted girl will not associate with you. I would like to know what use she would have for such a drunkard as you are? You are not a fit person to associate with her. She is a lady, but you are far from being a gentleman."

Jim made no reply. Had his mother asserted her authority over him in his childhood, it would no doubt have been beneficial; but now, when his habits had become fixed and he had fallen into evil influences, it was too late.

His father, too, had always been too indulgent. He loved Jim truly, but too unreasonably. He never

reproved him for misdeeds, and never refused him anything he asked for if he could possibly secure it for him.

No wonder that Jim grew up without the slightest idea of self-government. Even now, when Mrs. DeStay was at last aroused to just indignation—though probably remorse at her own past weaknesses would have been more in place—she felt it her duty to protect Mary Brown.

Though somewhat excited over his wife's sudden anger, Cony DeStay spoke kindly to her.

"You must not talk to Jim in that way," he said. "He is young yit, and kind words will do more good than scolding. All boys have their wild ways when they are young. Some time Jim will change and become a good man."

"Yes, use kind words," she retorted. "We used all the kind words we could think of, but what good did they do? I see your mean trick. You want to compel Mary Brown to marry him and, if she refuses, then you want to sell the property and drive Mary and her father and sister out of the house. Were it not for my inheritance you would not have anything. I gave it all to you and now you are taking all the mean advantages with it that you can."

"I don't know what Mary Brown wants with that young pauper, anyway. He has nothing to begin with," said Mr. DeStay, referring to Charles Moser.

"He is no more a pauper than you were when I married you, and he is possessed with good common

sense. Some people seem to lack good common sense," answered Mrs. DeStay.

Cony DeStay shifted uneasily during his wife's tirade, and when she stopped for want of breath he began anew: "You are right. It—" He was about to add: "It shall not be done, but had it not been for my kindness Pete Brown would have been out in the cold long ago."

But Mrs. DeStay, once started, was not to be stayed and she interrupted him: "Yes, I know I am right. I know he has as much or more now than you had when I married you, but I was deceived like many other women."

She spoke the truth. Her husband was practically penniless when they were married, but he managed to get all her inheritance into his possession. He was a shrewd investor and from a purely financial point of view the money could not have been in better hands.

Jim had fallen asleep during the controversy and the parents gradually calmed down. In a few days the quarrel was entirely forgotten.

Jim frequently asked for the mortgage, but his father persuaded him to wait for a more propitious time, while Mrs. DeStay resolved that it should never be. Jim repented of some of his follies, but was far from being an honorable, upright man. He did not call on Mary again until some years later, when he accompanied the High Sheriff of the county, as will be related hereafter.

CHAPTER XII

CHARLES IS PROMOTED

CHARLES was frequently tortured by the thought that he had spoken about Mary and his mother and sister during his illness, and he dreaded the day when Mrs. Newell would confront him with the accusation that he had told her a falsehood when he was admitted into her house as a boarder. But, still, he could not see any change in her disposition towards him. On the contrary, she became more and more indulgent to him, and when he was down in spirits and worried about his boarding and doctor bills, she would say: "Now, me boy, just stop worryin' an' botherin' yer brain all the time about those bills. It is plenty o' time to think about that arter ye git to work. Brace up an' ye will come out all right. Never fear, the sun will shine brighter again some time."

Charles' heart gave a bound when he for the first time during his illness sat in an armchair and beheld the people as they passed by the window of the front room to which he had been removed.

As soon as he was able to leave the house, he sauntered down town to the office to get the balance of his wages due him.

Mrs. Newell looked fondly after him as he walked along the street.

"Me bird has flown out of its cage at last," she said playfully to her next-door neighbor.

"I think there is a balance due me on my wages," said Charles politely to Mr. Grady as he presented himself before the desk.

"What's the name?" said Mr. Grady, looking keenly at him over his spectacles.

Charles gave his name and address.

"How is this?" said Mr. Grady on looking closely over the account. "This balance is due you some time. Why did you not come and get it before?"

"Well, the fact is, I was confined to my room and could not do so any sooner."

"Oh!" said Mr. Grady, casting a glance at Charles, "are you the young man that was hurt?"

"Yes, sir," answered Charles. "I had quite a time of it."

"Well, that is too bad! I am very sorry for you. Are you able to go to work now?"

"I may be able to go to work in several weeks from today," answered Charles, as he turned away from the desk.

"Hold on, young man; just a moment," said Mr. Grady. "I guess we still owe you a balance of—well —say—"

"This is all you owe me," interrupted Charles.

"No, it is not. We have a rule here that if one of our employes is hurt, we pay him his wages as long as he is unable to work, and—"

"That is a splendid rule," said Charles, interrupting him. "It suits me exactly. I can now pay my doctor bill and part of the boarding bill which I owe."

Mr. Grady smiled pleasantly at the terse answer, and gazed after Charles as he moved towards the door to leave the office.

"Hold on, young man," said Mr. Grady again as he beckoned to Charles to come to the desk.

"This man is full of 'hold ons'; I wonder where he came across so many?" said Charles somewhat pettishly to himself.

"The night-watchman left us this morning," said Mr. Grady, "and we have no one to take his place. Will you undertake to do the work?"

"That depends on what the work is."

"The night-watchman is expected to keep the office clean, attend to the fires, and occasionally go through the entire buildings to make sure that there is no danger on account of fire. The pay is not—"

"I can do it," said Charles, interrupting, for he was very anxious to secure the place.

"Well, come to the office this evening at six o'clock. Your hours will be from six o'clock in the evening to six o'clock in the morning."

This engagement offered golden opportunities to Charles to take walks to different places of interest in the city and to pursue his reading more extensively at the library, which was some distance away from his boarding-place.

In the afternoon Charles went to the library to do some reading. While bent over a book, Rev. Stonecipher, the chairman of the library committee, spoke to him. He had noticed Charles at the library on several occasions and was very favorably impressed with him.

"Young man," he said, "you seem to be deeply interested in your reading."

"Yes, sir," replied Charles, turning scarlet in his face.

"What book are you reading?"

"Byron's Poems."

"I noticed that you asked for that book several times before. You seem to be very much interested in the writings of that unfortunate young man's poetry."

"Why unfortunate?"

"Well, I mean unfortunate in one sense of the word only." Then, changing the subject, he added: "Which of his writings do you like best?"

"I prefer Childe Harold Pilgrimage."

"I think you made a good selection. Really, I consider it the best of his writings. You see, some of his writings are very questionable and should not be read by anyone. Why do you not read Shakespeare or some other author?"

"I read Shakespeare's works some time ago, and—"

"Do you not think you could find something new by reading his works again?"

Charles turned crimson. He hesitated, then finally said: "I think I could, but—"

"If you don't like to read Shakespeare just now, why don't you turn to some of our American authors, such as Bryant, Longfellow, Poe and Irving? They are excellent writers and I always get a great deal of information from them. Washington Irving is a very interesting writer."

Charles shoved his book aside as he said: "Do you prefer Irving to Scott?"

"Well, you see they are both excellent writers. You cannot make a mistake by reading both."

"I've read parts of the works of both writers, and—"

"Then try Poe, but be careful that you do not get excited when you descend into the Maelstrom," said Rev. Stonecipher with a smile when he walked away.

"I see you are ready for work," said Mr. Grady on seeing Charles in the office in the evening. Be a good young man and I will find some other work for you as soon as you are able to do it. The pay is low, but better be doing something than nothing."

Some annoyances occurred during the time that Charles was watchman. One evening, while he was dusting Mr. Grady's private desk, he happened to notice that a ten dollar bill was lying on the top of the desk. Charles picked it up and placed it into his vest pocket to take it home for safe-keeping until he would see Mr. Grady. He, however, did not feel safe about it, and thought it best to remain at the office until Mr. Grady would arrive.

"Mr. Grady," said Charles without any ceremony, "last evening while I dusted your desk I found this

bill lying on top of it. I placed it into my pocket for safe-keeping and awaited your coming to hand it to you."

"That's alright, young man," said Mr. Grady, pretending not to care much about it; "thank you very much," at the same time placing the bill into his pocket very unconcernedly.

"No, that is not alright," said Charles. "I am of the opinion that you placed that bill there to test my honesty, but in justice to myself I must say that it was not a proper act towards me. Some one else might have taken the money, and you might have been of the opinion that I had it, and I would be discharged or probably arrested, and a blot would be on my name forever. It shows that you had no confidence in me, and I will quit work."

Mr. Grady looked up in surprise. "Oh!" he said, "not so fast as that. You must not leave on that account. Why, you are the very man we want here. We must have honest men in and around this office. I'll be candid with you. I—I—placed the bill there to test you, and am very glad—well, I am well satisfied as it is. You see we are up to all kinds of men here, and we must always know with whom we are keeping company. I tell you—"

"You are partly right," answered Charles, "but what might have been the consequences had I left for my boarding-place with the money in my pocket, expecting to give it to you this evening? You might have sent a policeman after me and had me arrested, and I

would be in no end of trouble by this time—perhaps I would be in the lock-up or some other place of safe-keeping."

"Young man," said Mr. Grady sympathetically, "things do not go as fast as that around here. I—"

This brought to Charles' mind his landing in New York City and the trouble he had been in just as he landed.

"Oh, yes!" he said, "things move very fast in New York City, as I very well know. I had—"

"You reason well," interrupted Mr. Grady, "I must confess, and now being we got into this little squabble through my imprudence, I will present the bill to you. You may use it as you please—to any good advantage—and we'll say no more about it."

This was a tempting offer to Charles. His boarding was not paid, and, besides, he was sadly in need of clothes.

"I will accept the money only on condition that you will accept it again when I can return it to you."

"That settles it," said Mr. Grady pleasantly. "I will make a private memoranda of it, and when I need the money, I will ask you for it."

Charles left the office a happy man,

In spite of the attractions of the city and the extensive library, Charles could not forget home and friends. He frequently dreamed of Mary and his mother and sister. Again he crossed the familiar fields, and again he had that unfortunate encounter with Jim and his pals in the woods. On awakening

he found he had struck the wall of his room a terrific blow with his fist. He took this as an evil omen, and he dreaded the coming of the next day.

"Please, sir," said an errand boy accosting Charles, who was idly standing and watching the clerks before he left for his boarding-place, "the boss wants you come in."

Charles started. He immediarely recalled his dream.

"Shall I come into the office?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, you shall come into the office," answered the boy as he turned on his heels and walked away.

"There, what now?" said Charles to himself. "What are these men up to anyway?"

Charles unconsciously spoke louder than he had intended to speak, and the boy overheard him.

"I do not know," the boy replied. "The boss wants to see you."

Charles followed him to the office. His dark eyes sparkled as he looked from face to face in the room.

"That fellow will get the deuce," said one of the clerks to another clerk as he made a wry face.

"Be careful; don't speak so loud," retorted his friend, casting a side glance at Charles, "young Samson is amongst us."

Minutes were hours to Charles as he sat there waiting. He made an unsuccessful effort to concentrate his thoughts, but all in vain. He heard the clerks as they compared their accounts, and how he envied them.

Mr. Grady finished some work, and then he beckoned Charles to come to his desk.

Charles was very much embarrassed, and was really considering the answer he should make to some imaginary charge.

"We need a man to take charge of one of the teams to deliver goods to the various places in the city. You no doubt are well acquainted in the city by this time, and so I thought I would give you a trial. We, also, need a man to assist in the ware-room. It was my intention to tender you the position, but—you—see—the man that can get it must be able to write a fair hand, be accurate in figures and be able to render accurate accounts to this office of all the goods sent out.

Charles found no immediate answer. Mr. Grady read his thoughts and continued in a patronizing tone: "We have vacancies to fill frequently. You are young, and this will give you a chance to build up. I advise you to attend some night-school, and I think you can prepare yourself for a better position in a short time. Now—"

Charles interrupted him.

"Do you consider a person properly qualified for the last position if he can write fairly well and make out statements correctly?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Grady curtly, and by applying yourself well you can undertake it in—well, say about one year's time—at any rate we will see by that time what is in you."

"Can't you give me a trial at that position now?"

"Well—no—you see it is already partly promised, and I cannot go back on my word." Then waiting several seconds, he said abruptly: "Will you take charge of the team?"

"I must speak to Mr. Larkins before I can make any other arrangements. I understand that he expects me at the stables."

"Oh! that is alright. Those teams belong to this firm, and all men are hired by him through my instructions. By the way, you are expected to sleep in the ware-house and take your meals at an eating-house near by."

"Must I sleep in the ware-house?" asked Charles with evident surprise.

"Well, there is no must about it, though many of our employes are anxious to sleep here. We have nice, cozy rooms—"

"I prefer to remain at my old boarding-place," said Charles, interrupting.

"Any particular reason for it?" queried Mr. Grady, smiling.

"Why, yes! I have my books there and can pursue my studies during the evenings without being annoyed by anyone."

Mr. Grady shrugged his shoulders and stared at Charles.

"What night-school do you attend?" he said.

"None."

"Studying by himself," mused Mr. Grady, "when other young men are having a good time. I declare.

He will succeed in this busy world." Then turning abruptly in his chair, he said to one of his clerks: "Here, clerk, have the young man write out an application for a higher position and place it on file." Turning as abruptly to Charles, he bade him apply himself to his studies, and promised him that he would do all he could for him in the future.

Charles recalled his dream. He could not see any evil boding in an advancement like this.

When he entered his boarding-place his face was all smiles.

"What is it, Charlie?" said the kind old lady on beholding his beaming face.

Charles made no answer.

"What is it, me boy?" she asked again, surmising that something unusual had occurred.

"I am promoted. I have a team now," answered Charles playfully.

"Permoted! Ye don't say!" exclaimed the old lady as she extended her hand. "Ye are the lad for this old place. Sure ye are. Now ye must put on airs with those clerks in the office. Mind what I tell ye."

Charles felt light-hearted when he surveyed himself in the looking-glass, and took particular pride in his toilet. He had not only studied his books during his spare hours, but the fashions also.

"It will not be many days before I will have money enough to pay my bills and go home. I will write to Mary and mother this very moment. I will not postpone it any longer," said he to himself.

He took his pen to write, but all was a blank to him. He could not concentrate his thoughts.

Mr. Grady resumed his tedious work—checking bank accounts and making notes of different business matters. When his work was completed and he had a few leisure moments, he pondered over the conversation he had had with Charles Moser.

"Here, clerk," he said abruptly without turning in his chair, "did you have that young man to write an application for a higher position?"

"I did, sir," answered the clerk.

"Let me see it. I want to add my signature and recommendation to it."

The clerk handed the application to Mr. Grady, made his bow and returned to his desk. Mr. Grady looked at the paper, but, without reading it, called the clerk somewhat petulantly. "Here, clerk," he said, "my order was that you should have the young man to write the application himself, but I see you wrote it for him. Have him to write another when he comes to the office again. I wish to have it in his own handwriting."

"The young man wrote the application himself."

"Well, I am surprised," said Mr. Grady as he handed it back; I think he is entitled to a higher position. But by the way, do you know anything about his habits?"

"I am informed that he is a young man of excellent habits."

"Well, a young man who studies by himself during the evenings after a hard day's work is entitled to a great deal of credit. It seems almost impossible to me that this young man should spend his leisure hours at his books, when other young men are having a good time. I must speak to him sometime when I am not so busy. Excellent opportunities are afforded to young men in the city, but many fail to take advantage of them."

CHAPTER XIII

CHARLES MEETS WITH A MISHAP

THE morning after Charles Moser was called into the private office of his employer and offered the position of delivery-man, found him enthroned upon the high seat of one of the delivery-wagons so familiar to city dwellers. As he drove up Broadway he chuckled to himself, "—dollars a week, that's fine! Only a few weeks more, then I'll say good-bye to the city and go back to my old home. I do not see why Mr. Grady did not give me the other position. I know more about checking and keeping accounts than he thinks I do. I had my eyes open all along. He has it in his mind that I must still attend some school. I wonder if those clerks ever went to school. Judging by their writing and spelling, I should think not. But they are all good fellows, and I can get along well with them. I loaned Mr. Kearney five dollars some time ago and he returned it promptly. He even wanted to pay me interest. Interest! Not any interest from him. He offered to help me get that other position, but I may not want it. Before long I will leave for my old home, and then good-bye to the old city forever."

Charles was at peace with the world. At this moment it would have been an easy matter even to conciliate him with Jim DeStay and his pals. His heart

was filled with kindness toward every living creature, and it cost him an effort to resist the impulse to bid a friendly good morning to every passer-by.

"I have some money now," he continued in his musings, "and in a few weeks I will have more, and then I can buy presents for Mary, mother, Bessie and Alberta. Then I will go home and they will all forgive me for leaving without telling them. I will never go home empty-handed, nor will I ever let them know when I am in want."

But Charles did not know that the path of the unwary in a large city is beset with obstacles and dangers, nor did he realize to what extremities the lack of money can drive a man. He hoarded his monthly savings as a miser hoards his gold, and frequently upon retiring to his room in the evening he would take the money from his pocket and count it.

"The pile is growing," he said one evening when he had finished counting it. "A little more money will enable me to complete my ward-robe, leaving my board as the only item of expense. So a large part of my earnings can go to swell my pile."

Next morning his friend Kearney called him aside. They were always good friends. "Mussey, I am in need of a little money for several days. I want to buy a ring for my "duck." It is a fine ring. As soon as I have it I will bring it around and show it to you. You know a fellow must keep up appearances in the city."

"Oh, certainly, certainly!" said Charles as he thrust his hand into his pocket, "any amount that I can possibly spare."

Kearney, seeing his willingness, added: "I thought of asking you for twenty, but could you not make it thirty? Then I will take the other ring. It is a little heavier. You know I will do the right thing with you."

"Willing Charles handed him thirty dollars, his entire savings, and apologized for not having more.

Kearney was well satisfied, however. He did not need more. To-morrow he would bring the ring and show it to Charles; and what was still better, Charles would probably be a guest at the wedding in the near future.

Charles met some friends and conversed familiarly with them as he drove along the street.

"Please, sir, give me a dime to buy bread for my poor children," said a poor, ragged woman, extending her hand as he emerged from one of the fashionable residences where he had delivered several small parcels.

The ever-willing Charles thrust his hand into his pocket once more. Lo and behold! He found several small pieces of silver. He handed it to her.

"Oh, what a good soul," said the woman. "This is money enough to buy bread with for a week. I hope the good Lord will—," but her words were idly spoken. Charlas had bounded on his wagon like a deer and was on his way up the street. She had ex-

tended her hand to a well-dressed young man shortly before, but he had passed her with a scowl.

Several days passed by. Kearney did not make his appearance at the office, but Charles paid no attention to it.

"I say, Mussey, how much are you out of pocket?" said one of the clerks as he hailed him one day.

"Out of pocket, what?" said Charles, not understanding the question.

"How much did you invest?" said the clerk familiarly.

"Invest in what?"

"In Kearney?"

A great light broke upon Charles, so he answered guardedly: "How much did you invest?"

"Oh, that is not my question."

"But it is mine," answered Charles.

"We are each in for twenty," was the reply.

Charles put on a sober face. "You must have lots of money; money to burn," he said as he moved towards the door.

"By jove," thought Charles, "I am beaten again. Is this city friendship?"

"But hold on! You did not tell us for how much you are soaked," said the clerk.

"I am in for thirty," replied Charles.

After Charles was gone, one of the clerks said: "I did not think Mussey had that much money. I pity him. He is so kind. He talked of going home the other day, but at this rate he will have to remain some

time longer. I almost wish I could give him the money."

"Suppose you would give it to him. It might be a favor," remarked his friend slyly.

"But I can't. I am dead broke myself. I don't know how I shall be able to pay my board."

"I am in the same fix," was the dejected reply.

When Charles climbed on his wagon he had fire in his eye. "If I meet that fellow, I'll put 'a Dutch head on him,'" he said to the bystanders. He had by this time acquired some of the city slang.

He never had the opportunity to make his threat good, but a few days later he had a whispered conversation with Mr. Grady at the latter's desk, asking with evident reluctance: "Could you advance me a five? I am short in money and my board must be paid. You can deduct it coming pay-day."

"What in the deuce are you young men up to anyway," growled Mr. Grady. "It is almost impossible for me to grant your request. I am short myself; besides, you are the fifth man who asked me for money to-day."

Charles explained to Mr. Grady why he was in need of money. Mr. Grady, though strict with his clerks, also had his weaknesses, and one was his inability to say "no" at times.

"You shall have it. I pity you all, but I tell you I was badly soaked myself by that confounded scoundrel. He promised to show me the gold ring when he would come around. Did he make you any promises?"

Charles looked rather sheepish. "He promised to show the ring to me when he comes around. I don't know what promises he made to you."

Mr. Grady laughed heartily at Charles' reply. He had sympathy for the men and paid them all a week's salary in advance the next day.

Charles left his employer with a dejected heart. He knew that it would take a long time to acquire enough money to go home.

Day after day, week after week and month after month the sun poured its hot, scorching rays on the well-paved streets of New York City, but Charles delivered goods without a murmur to the various parts of the city.

"Charlie," his friends would say, "do not be working and studying all the time. Have a good time. You need it."

Charles merely smiled at them and made no reply. The only desire in his mind was to save money and go home. He was continually planning for his promotion, but was always at a disadvantage.

The good, kind Mr. Grady was himself elevated to a higher position, and the head clerk, Mr. Jarvis, was elevated to the position made vacant by Mr. Grady.

Mr. Jarvis insisted that Charles should room in the ware-house, and contrary to Charle's wishes he was compelled to leave the kind old boarding mistress and board near where he roomed.

The rooming place was not to Charles' liking. Card-playing, scuffling and loud talking were the pas-

times of the evening, and Charles was unable to attend to his studies, much to his sorrow.

One day as he was driving along one of the streets, delivering parcels and boxes containing various kinds of goods, a mishap befel him, which caused him to leave the city and change future plans.

The streets were overcrowded with people and vehicles going in different directions and to various places, and all was noise and confusion. The horses became excited, and, though an expert driver, Charles could not manage them. They dashed against a vehicle at full speed and damaged it considerably.

The cry of "man hurt" and "police" echoed and re-echoed in all directions.

Charles assisted the occupants of the vehicle all he could. Several policemen came to the place and on the information of some of the bystanders arrested him.

Poor Charles was in trouble again! He explained the cause of the accident, but all was in vain. He was taken to police headquarters, where he was placed under a vigilant guard to await the arrival of Mr. Jarvis. The team was taken to a stable near by and cared for.

"You have two weeks' wages due you," said Mr. Jarvis to Charles after talking with the police. "We will pay that on this bill, and the balance no doubt we will have to lose, as is generally the case with such loafers. It would be a nice thing if we could get rid of them all."

The remarks stung Charles severely, and he turned aside to hide his mortification. The employer had spoken to other men in the same way, and they had taken no notice of it, but with Charles it was different. He could not brook such remarks.

"What is the amount of the bill?" said Charles after Mr. Jarvis had left. "I want to pay it."

"Your boss promised to pay it," answered the policeman without taking any notice of Charles.

"I pay my own bills," said he as he produced the money.

"Oh, that is not the rule in such cases, and, besides, your employer promised to pay it."

"I pay my own bills," said Charles again.

"I am sorry for you, young man," said the policeman who had arrested him. "You know such things will happen. I wish the bill could be settled in some other way."

Charles was not in spirits to be coaxed nor petted. His money was gone and he had no hopes of going home in the near future. He stood back and scowled on the policeman. "So it can," he said, "if you remove your blue coat and that star."

The policeman did not feel like settling matters in that way, but, raising a warning finger, said: "Young man, be careful. Do not speak too hastily. You are in New York City."

"I am perfectly aware of it. I've had lots of experiences already," said Charles.

"My, you look cool after bein' in the cooler," said a little "Street Arab" to Charles as he emerged from police headquarters. "I say—"

Luckily a policeman was in sight or the young urchin might have received internal injuries.

"There is Mussey," whispered one of the clerks in the office to his friend, at the same time glancing at Charles. "He looks very much down in spirits. I bet the company is in for a nice little sum of money for his carelessness."

"Ho, Charlie," said Mr. Jarvis on looking up from his work, evidently not thinking about the mishap of the afternoon. "There are several parcels and boxes here, which must be delivered immediately. It is getting late and—"

"Not to-day," interrupted Charles. "We have an account to settle before we begin to talk about other matters, and I do not wish to lose any time."

"An account to settle!" said Mr. Jarvis as he placed his pen aside and looked at Charles in surprise.

Charles produced the receipt.

"Charlie, get your money," he said. Then, after a short pause, he added, "Then take the team and—"

"Not to-day," said Charles, interrupting him.

"Charlie, you must not get out of humor" said Mr. Jarvis, smiling pleasantly. "You—"

"I am out of humor. Well, no—." He went to the clerk, got his money, then looked dejectedly from clerk to clerk, but said nothing.

Several of the clerks admitted to their friends afterwards that they would have been in a sad fix had "the bolt" struck them instead of Charles.

Charles eagerly scanned the faces of the boarders when he entered the room at his boarding-place. He imagined he saw mischievous smiles on their faces.

"Oh, ho!" cried the boarding mistress with a merry laugh after Charles had imparted the story and his intentions to her. "You must not leave on account of this little mishap. No one will think about it to-morrow. There is no harm in getting a cooling sometimes—not a bit of it. Dress up after supper. Put on a silk hat and take a walk. Then no one will know you from anyone of our 'biggest guns.' The people of New York City have other things to talk about which are of more importance to them. They do not bother about such trifling affairs as this one is."

CHAPTER XIV

CHARLES BECOMES A SAILOR

AT one of the many wharves on the majestic Hudson Charles stopped and saw the varied river craft plying to and fro, while a motely company of idlers were sunning themselves or casting a line in a vain attempt to inveigle the denizens of the deep.

Officers and crews were passing hastily from docks to vessels preparing to depart.

Charles eagerly scanned the faces of the captains as they strode by, hoping to encounter some kindly glance. He was finally rewarded, and he pleasantly accosted him with: "Do you need any help on your boat? If you do, I shall be pleased to offer my services."

"Aye, aye! I need a man, but you're not wearing the right kind o' goods for this biz," genially replied the captain.

"I want to work for my passage up the river to Albany," resumed Charles.

"You don't be one o' the kind that steals a ride, do ye?" An' bein' you're an honest lad, Mike Murray's not the kind o' man to make ye work fer nothin'. I'm short one man, an' will pay accordin' to what other men git."

Charles thanked the captain and asked him where he could change his clothes.

"An' is it a change o' clothin' you want? I don't keep clothin' for my men."

"I have clothes of my own," quickly responded Charles. "I want a place to change them."

The captain ordered a deck-hand to show him to the cabin. When he again appeared on deck, he approached the captain and said: "Here I am, sir, ready to go to work."

"Now ye look like a workin' man. A young man with such broad shoulders an' willin' to work can always git a job," said the captain, slapping him familiarly on the back. "Go to the cabin," he continued "an' git your breakfast an' a 'chicker', an' ye will be ready for work."

"I had my breakfast," said Charles.

"Well, go to the cabin an' git a 'chicker', an' ye can work better."

Charles scratched his head.

" 'Chicker!' What is that anyway?"

"Oh, go 'long with ye an' git a drink. It is a little chilly this mornin' an' a 'chicker' will brace ye up a little.. Ye can work better, ye know. Ye will be stronger."

"Better not take it. Might be the cause of my taking a sudden plunge into the Hudson, and you would have the trouble to fish me out."

"Oh, git away with ye an' git to work," said the jovial captain good-naturedly.

The crew was loading a cargo of flour for various places along the Hudson River. Charles immediately

took his place among the men and assisted them to roll the bulky barrels up the gang-plank. It was hard work for him, but he made no complaint and managed to do his share of the work.

After the flour was loaded, the vessel weighed anchor and set sail on what was then a long and tedious voyage.

The hands proved rough and quarrelsome, and Charles being sick at heart, refrained from mingling with these coarse, illiterate fellows. He went to the rear of the vessel and stood by himself, and overlooked the placid Hudson and the beautiful palisades as the winds wafted the vessel gently along.

"Farther and farther away from home," said Charles as he again glanced from one place to another. Then, raising his head and looking heavenward, he exclaimed: "Great God, when will all my troubles end?"

The captain recognized in Charles one who was worthy of better circumstances, and took great interest in pointing out the historical places along the Hudson River to him. They spent hours upon hours with each other during the days and twilight of the evenings conversing upon various subjects of interest.

"There, young man," said the captain quite enthusiastically one day, "is the place where Gineral Arnold an' Major Andre made arrangements for the surrender of the fort on the hill. Near this spot the British sloop 'Vulture' was anchored after landing Andre."

"Yonder is the rugged path taken by Arnold when he fled to join the British."

"These are very interesting historic places. It was always my great desire to sail the Hudson and view its beautiful palisades and magnificent scenery," replied Charles enthusiastically, "but I did—"

"Be you a clark?" interrupted the captain. "Ye seem to—"

"No, I am a sailor just now drifting and drifting farther and farther away from home and friends." Considering a moment, he resumed: "But I wish—"

Charles did not finish speaking, for the captain stood before him with his mouth and eyes wide open, not knowing what to think. With these few words carelessly spoken Charles had given the captain much to conjecture about.

"Young man, have ye trouble?" said the captain kindly to Charles.

"Oh, yes," answered Charles as he wiped away a tear, "more than I can bear."

The captain made no further inquiry. He pitied Charles. In his good, kind, blunt way he laid his hand on Charles' shoulder as he said, "Young man, ye must be brave. I repeat it, ye must be brave. We all have our troubles. We all seem to want what we cannot get. But, you see, we must put up a bold front. Well, you know—" The captain stopped and considered. Then he tried to swallow a lump that had gathered in his throat. The call was made for

the captain, and he walked away and left Charles to conjecture what the end of the story would have been.

The boat sailed slowly up the river against the outgoing tide. The crew stood idly around, spinning sailors' yarns and pulling clouds of smoke from their black clay pipes.

"That young man did not pay his footin'," remarked one of the sailors sarcastically, nodding towards Charles. "He will not remain long on the boat, and we will never git it. I guess we will have to take the starch out of the fellow some evenin'."

"Aye, aye," said another, "we must attend to him."

"Well, then I will be the first to collar him," remarked another.

"He is a fine young man. Take my word for it. He may be a little stuck-up, but he is not doin' any harm," said the captain, trying to keep peace.

Charles overheard these remarks concerning himself as he passed to and fro, but remembering his experiences at the station when he entered New York City, he decided that discretion was the better part of valor.

"Well, Sam," said Charles, addressing a colored man, who was sitting by himself and humming a plantation song, "you are having a nice time just now by yourself."

The colored man looked at Charles with a merry twinkle in his eye. "No use crying, boss, when things go wrong. Always keep up de spirits," he said.

"Can you keep up your spirits when things go wrong?"

"I allers make it a poin' to keep up de spirits."

"Oh, you will get along well in this world," said Charles. "You are looking on the bright side of it."

"Always look on de bright side; always on de bright side, sah, no mattah how it goes," answered the colored man.

"How far is it across the river at this place?" inquired Charles.

"I don't know, massa, but I dink about four, five thousand miles."

The colored man had no idea of distances. Many a man would have sneered at the illiterate man, but Charles merely smiled good-naturedly and continued his conversation.

"Are you familiar with this part of the country?" inquired Charles, pointing to the high cliffs along the river.

"Wat's dat, massa?" asked the colored man quickly.

Charles repeated the question.

"No, massa, Ise not flamiliar wid dis country. Ise from de Souf."

"From the South!" ejaculated Charles.

"Yas, I lef' de old plantation down dare an' come to dis one up heah."

"Did you run away from your master?"

"No, boss; Ise not run away. I jest lef' de plantation down dare an' come to dis one, an' massa could not fin' me. Dat's all."

"Sambo," as the sailors called him, was a good-natured fellow indeed. His quaint logic and dialect were the cause of a great deal of merriment to Charles and the sailors. With his red bee-hive hat drawn over his ears, his shoes several sizes too large for his feet, and his clothes much the worse for wear and tear, he looked odd enough amongst them.

He was shy and wary in his talk at first, but he soon learned to place confidence in Charles, and he related many incidents of plantation life to him.

He had his trials and troubles also, but he always looked on the sunny side of all things. He was smuggled out of the slavery states into the free states by the so-called "underground railroad," and was on his way to Canada, where he would be entirely safe from pursuit.

The monotony of the voyage as they glided slowly along was frequently wiled away by the sailors playing cards, spinning yarns, dancing and listening to the music of the banjo as accompanied by Sambo's singing. He would frequently sing some of his favorite plantation songs, which had a delightful effect on the crew as the sounds of the music echoed and re-echoed softly from shore to shore.

But Charles, sick at heart, soon wearied of tales of plantation life, and he frequently sought some secluded place where he could sit by himself hours at a time and meditate. The thoughts of home and friends were always in his restless mind.

The captain frequently noticed that Charles was despondent, and correctly judged it a case of home

sickness. "You must keep up your courage. You must lay all trouble aside and be happy like the other men," he would say as he many times encouraged him.

But the crew, seeing the kindness shown to Charles by the captain, became very jealous and frequently quarrelsome. "He is a sucker. We must get rid of him," they would say.

"Come, Charlie," said the captain one evening, "you must get your supper and then go on night-watch."

Lulled by the gentle rock of the vessel, Charles had fallen asleep. He rubbed his eyes and looked at the captain. "I must have been dozing," he said, smiling.

"Aye! aye! an' a dreamin'," smiled back the captain.

"You have a little score to settle with the boys, Charlie," said the captain after he had finished his meal.

Charles glanced at him. "I owe them nothing," he answered quickly without realizing what they really meant.

"It's a rule among sailors when a new man joins a crew to give them a little smile."

"A little smile!" ejaculated Charles; "and what's that?"

"You owe them a bottle of brandy."

"I owe them nothing," retorted Charles.

This emphatic response elicited a variety of remarks from the crew who had gathered around. One

whispered to another: "We must take that high talk out of him or he will soon be boss of the boat."

The captain, realizing what would happen, advised Charles to give them the money, which he did, whereupon the score was liquidated, and Charles thought: "It is sometimes best for a man to stoop to get along in this world."

As the evening advanced Charles took his place on the forward watch. A stiff breeze arose and the vessel moved swiftly along in its course. Charles gazed with delight on the palisades, which were pictured so beautifully before him. Then, again, he would turn and gaze sadly at some receding light as it flickered softly through the window of some lonely cottage in the distance.

Awaking from his reverie, he beheld Sam standing by his side with eyes and mouth wide open.

"Sam," said Charles somewhat apologetically, "I am looking at those beautiful hills and—"

"Yas, Massa Mussah, those mountains are very nice to look at, but Ise terribly 'fraid of them. I tell you, they will shuly come down on us sometime—shuly, shuly."

"Why, Sam, you are excited. What has happened?"

"Oh, Mistah Mussah! de awfulest thin's are happenin' in dese mountains, an' Ise 'fraid dey come down on us before long. Oh, Ise awfully 'cited."

"You must not be so excited. Some one must have been telling you wonderful stories about these hills, and—"

"Yas, sah, dey tell me in de cabin 'bout dis ribber an' how de spirits cross it in de night an' go into de mountains an' live dare."

"Oh, there are no spirits in these mountains, Sam. Someone is—"

"Oh, shua, dey roll de stones 'roun' on de mountains, an' if dey get 'cited dey throw them down on de boats. Dey will shuly throw dem down on dis boat to-night. Ise heard de thunder of—"

"Come, come, Sam! You must not get excited. No one will hurt you. They were relating an old story to you about these mountains and trying to scare you."

This explanation quieted Sam's fears for the time being.

After a few moments' pause Charles added: Now," Sam, let's have some music. It will help to keep the spirits away from the boat."

Sam was very anxious to satisfy Charles, and especially anxious to keep away the spirits. He took up his banjo and began to play the well-known song:

"No one to love, none to caress,
Roaming alone through this world's wilderness;
Sad is my heart, joy is unknown,
For in my sorrow I'm weeping alone;
No gentle voice, no tender smile,
Makes me rejoice, or cares beguile,
No one to love, none to caress,
Roaming alone through this world's wilderness;
Sad is my heart, joy is unknowu,
For in my sorrow I'm weeping alone."

After Sam had played the above stanza, he happened to glance at Charles, who was standing before him with eyes and mouth wide open, and unable to conceal his emotions.

"Come, come, Mistah Mussah, you must not get 'cited. No one will hurt you," said Sam kindly.

Some sailors who stood near and saw Charles pronounced it a clear case of home-sickness.

CHAPTER XV

THE sun shone brightly on the beautiful Hudson one afternoon when the vessel glided into the slip at Albany and awaited its turn to be unloaded. Wishing to take a view of the town, and, if possible, secure some other employment more suitable to his taste, Charles asked for leave of absence for several hours, which was granted.

Strolling through the town he noticed a commotion at a crossing of one of the principal streets near a large and extensive building. On drawing nearer he perceived a small, spare man, with high cheek bones, high, receding forehead, and head covered with long, red, bushy hair, standing on a store box and haranguing to a crowd of people assembled directly around him about the "Laws of the Country," the "Duties of the President," and the "Mexican War."

Several times he drew a newspaper from one of his coat pockets and expounded from it to the vociferous crowd. Then, raising his voice to a shrill, monotonous tone, he made uncomplimentary remarks about the armies which had invaded Mexico. To make his remarks more emphatic, he struck the paper into the palm of his hand with a heavy thwack to the great amusement of some of the bystanders.

Charles scrutinized the crowd with an inquisitive eye. He noticed that it consisted of very intelligent

looking people, and the question arose in his mind: "Will they tolerate such talk?"

Then he again noticed a tall, slim, elderly man with a chin beard, dressed in a thread-bare soldiers' uniform, standing near him, who seemed to be very much dissatisfied with the remarks made by the speaker.

Finally the speaker worked himself into a great frenzy and again made some uncomplimentary remarks about the armies that had invaded Mexico.

No sooner had the words escaped the speaker's lips than the old man swung himself clumsily on the box before him, and shaking his bony hand near the speaker's face, he cried: "Did I understand you to say that the army which invaded Mexico was—?" The rest was lost to Charles, for the crowd began to shout at the top of their voices:

"Go it, Mexico! We are with you, Mexico," and similar expressions.

The speaker, seeing the commotion caused and fearing bodily harm, became deathly pale, sprang from the box and escaped.

Charles was as enthusiastic as any one of them. Turning to a bystander he said: "Well, that old soldier was just the man for him, I'll be bound."

"What old soldier?" said the bystander, evidently not thinking of "Mexico."

"Old 'Mexico,' of course," cried Charles, roaring with laughter, for he could not control his feelings.

"Oh, no, no!" cried the bystander, shaking with laughter. "He was no soldier. He never was in the army. He is one of the town politicians. He was particularly active in the time of the Mexican war, and had many arguments about our army and the invasion of Mexico. The boys for fun bought a uniform for him and gave him the name of 'Mexico'. He wears the uniform ever since."

"Give me a quarter, boss," said a man, extending his hand towards Charles, who was on his way back to the vessel.

Not granting the request, the fellow made an insulting remark, and at the same time stepped before Charles and blocked the way. Charles pushed him gently aside. The fellow being "top heavy," lost his balance, and with the cry of "police" on his lips fell sprawling on the sidewalk.

Charles became frightened. "What, the police again!" he thought, and turning round the corner of the street ran precipitately down an alley to the vessel, reaching it in time to avoid a policeman who happened to come that way.

All was commotion at the wharf when Charles reached there. Mr. VanDyne was loading a cargo of lumber for New York City. Several of his men were absent, and it was impossible to load the vessel in time to leave at the appointed hour.

"There is a good man for you, provided you can git him," said Captain Murry, pointing in the direction where Charles was standing. "You can depend

on it that he is a good man. I will grant him permission to assist you."

"I shall be pleased to have him, if—"

"Oh, he is a good man. You can take my word for it," interrupted Captain Murry.

"Young man," said Mr. VanDyne, addressing Charles, "I will give you two dollars a day and a bottle of brandy, if you will help us to finish loading this cargo of lumber."

"I will help you for the two dollars a day, but I don't care a fig for the bottle of brandy."

"Oh, you don't care for the bottle of brandy!" cried Mr. VanDyne. "Then there is one dollar extra in it for you."

Charles applied himself with a will. The perspiration rolled down his forehead and cheeks. He did not notice that the observing eye of Mr. VanDyne followed every move that he made.

Ho, there, old man!" cried Captain Murry to Mr. Money, who was coming down the wharf. "How are you today?"

"Ho, there, yourself!" replied Mr. Money in a very surly manner, at the same time shading his eyes to protect them from the noon-day sun.

"Out of humor again?" said Captain Murry. "You seem to be out of humor again. Always out of humor, I suppose."

Mr. Money stared at him. "If you would have all the trouble with these blamed clerks that I have, you would always be out of humor yourself," he said.

"You must not talk about your men that way. You must keep cool, an' ye will git along well with them."

"Yes, 'keep cool!' How can a man 'keep cool' when he is all over crowded with work and has no one to help him?"

"Why don't ye git help? You always have a chance to git help here."

"Yes, get help! One day there is plenty of help and another day none. The fact is, I had a good man to keep the books, but he was caught in stealing, and I discharged him immediately. Hang it, how shall I get along with such men?" said Mr. Money, hitting the palm of his hand with his fist.

"An' you really caught him stealin'?"

"Well—yes—no, but the assistant bookkeeper did."

"Hire good men. Hire men that don't steal."

"That is what I am trying to do, but where can I get good men? It seems that—" He stopped speaking. He shifted his position restlessly and his brows clouded. "Well," he began again, "I thought this man was an angel. I trusted him to anything, but I found to my sorrow that he was a regular rascal. We watched him for some time, and yesterday we had the good fortune to catch him. I promoted the assistant bookkeeper to his place and must now get a man to take this man's place."

"I can help ye out, Mr. Money."

"You can help me out!"

"Yes, I have the very man for ye."

"None of your codding, captain, with me to-day. I am too busy just now."

"I have the very man for ye. He is the best man I have."

"A sailor, I suppose. A likely fellow he must be. One of your goodies that you picked up somewhere."

The captain contracted his brows. He did not like the compliment Mr. Money paid to the sailors.

"Hie, there, Mussey! Come over this way with yourself," cried Captain Murry to Charles, who was just in the act of laying one of the sailors flat on the ground.

"Seems to understand that business pretty well," grunted Mr. Money; "but bother, it is really no use to be wasting any time on him. I have had men enough of that kind, and I don't wish to—"

"Wouldn't ye better take a look at him before formin' an opinion?"

"I can do that."

"Wonder what the 'cap' wants with Mussey?" said some of the sailors.

"Guess he's wantin' him to help him clean the cabin. Know Mussey is very accommodatin' to him of late," rejoined one.

"Mr. Money wants a man to 'sist on his books," said Captain Murry to Charles. "I asked him to give you a chance."

Charles was not a little astonished.

"I am quite well satisfied where I am at present; and, besides, I thought that I was giving satisfaction," replied Charles.

This was rather a slim excuse for Charles to make, but he was making calculations to go home as soon as he would have money enough to do so. He was really thinking that the return trip to New York City would be his last one. He had now given up all ideas of going home with his pockets full of money.

Mr. Money, a true business man and doing everything in a business like way, was not favorably impressed with Charles, but wishing to favor the captain, asked him several questions.

Charles answered them promptly, but still Mr. Money had his doubts.

"Well, really, I do need a man," said Mr. Money, "but he must be good in figures and know how to make himself useful on the books. I—do—not—think you—"

"Just as you say," interrupted Charles, turning suddenly on his heels and walking away.

"What the deuce is wrong with yer anyway?" said Captain Murry. "Why can't ye be civil with the lad?"

Captain Murry had a high opinion of Charles. He had frequently assisted him in making out statements, and they were always found correct.

"I am afraid he cannot do the work. You see—"

"Afraid or not afraid, ye can give him a chance," said the captain bluntly.

"Well," said Mr. Money, "I'll give him a trial. You'll be responsible for his doings, I suppose?"

"I will that. Take me word for it."

"Give a mortgage on the 'Half Moon' for security?"

"Yes, an' on me property in New York City."

"Well, I'll give him a trial to please you."

"Charlie," said Captain Murry, "we must now look for a boardin' place for ye."

"Yes, I must now have a boarding place, but where shall I be able to get one? I am a stranger in the—"

"Never fear me, lad," said Captain Murry, to whom all men were lads until they had reached the fortieth milestone, "I will git one for ye."

They walked slowly along some distance. Suddenly Charles said: "Captain, I hope I shall be able to accompany you on your return trip to New York City on my way home the next time you come up this way."

"An' are ye wishin' to go home?" said the captain, turning to Charles.

"Yes, I am very anxious to go home," said Charles, "but I cannot do so now. I—"

"I do not blame ye for wantin' to go home."

"Yes, I made a sad mistake in leaving my home, but—"

"Here we are," said Captain Murry as he stopped in front of a nice cozy frame dwelling and rang the door bell. The door was opened by a frail girl of about fourteen years of age, who greeted them with a smile and a pleasant "come in."

"Howdy, Betsy," said Captain Murry pleasantly, pinching her ear, "is mamma in?"

"Mamma is in the kitchen," she said politely as she opened the sitting room and showed them in. But Captain Murry changed his mind and followed the young miss to the kitchen, leaving Charles in the room conjecturing about the forwardness of the Captain.

"My sister," said Captain Murry to Charles when he entered the room with a well dressed elderly lady by his side. Then, after a slight pause, he added: "She will give you boardin' an' a good room—a room good enough fer a king."

"We will show you the room after tea," said the lady politely.

The captain turned suddenly on Charles as they were walking to the wharf. Charlie, he said: "It is a mighty hard thin' fer me to see my sister struglin' along with those three children tryin' to make a livin'. But she is a brave woman! I tell ye she is brave! She an' I were the youngest in a family of five children, an' we were always together like twins. But the others are all gone an' we are all alone in this wide world. We both got married. She remained at this place and I moved to New York City. Several weeks after I had left Albany I received the sad news of the death of her husband. I could not believe it at first. I did not know what to do. Then I resolved never to let my sister an' those dear children suffer, an' I always kept me word." The captain dashed away a tear as he said: "Charlie, we all have our trials an' troubles."

"Yes," said Charles, "I surely have my share of it."

CHAPTER XVI

CHARLES IS APPOINTED CHECKING MASTER

CHARLES now was checking master at the wharf. It was a responsible position, and required a great deal of thought and care. He had his trouble and annoyances with the men on the wharf, but his greatest annoyer was Captain Murry, who made Mr. Money's office his lounging place during his sojourn in Albany.

"How are you gettin' along?" he would frequently say as he eagerly glanced over Charles' shoulders when he was at work at his books.

"Oh, I am getting along quite well, but it is very trying work for me at present."

"Seems to be very tryin' work; very tryin' work, indeed," repeated Captain Murry.

"Yes, it is, but I must do the best I can," replied Charles. "I suppose I will be able to do better in a few days. You know it takes time."

"That's right, Charlie. Stick to it. I know it does take time. Do the best ye kin. I know it will go better in a few weeks."

"I must stick to it. I am in for it now. That is the best I can do to make a success of it."

Captain Murry was highly elated that Charles was successful in getting the position, but he somewhat

feared his inability to do the work, and could not avoid showing it. Still, in spite of his fears, he managed to put up a bold front for Charles.

"Now ye have the right man fer that place," he said to Mr. Money one morning as he flung himself in a chair, lit a cigar and began to read a newspaper.

"Yes, he is a good man, there is no doubt about it," replied Mr. Money in an absent-minded way.

"The best man ye iver had," retorted Captain Murry.

"Well, I have my doubts about his being the best man I ever had; but—well—you know I had good men already."

"To steal," cried Captain Murry, who did not like to be contradicted.

"Oh, my men did not all steal," said Mr. Money with a flushed face. "I had some good men already, and still have them, but, of course—"

"No, the men do not all steal," said Captain Murry, retracting some of his words spoken so hastily.

"Or you and I might be included among them," interrupted Mr. Money.

The captain blushed in his turn. He again became interested in his cigar and newspaper, and Mr. Money and Charles were not molested by him for some time.

Charles noticed that the head book-keeper did not like him; and when he desired some information, he called on the assistant book-keeper, who was a kind and obliging man.

Several days later the "Half Moon" was on its way down the Hudson River. Charles stood on the wharf

and waved his hand to the crew as he sadly gazed on the receding vessel. It became smaller and smaller as it glided swiftly along before a brisk wind, until it was lost to view.

"I see no use standing here and watching that vessel. I may some day accompany them on my way homeward," said Charles to himself as he beat a hasty retreat into the office.

Charles noticed that Mr. Money became more and more inquisitive about the books. He would scrutinize them thoroughly every day. Charles could not imagine what reasons he had to do so.

"Mr. Moser," said Mr. Money after looking carefully over the books one day, "do you object to your taking charge of the money and cash book?"

Charles hesitated. He could not answer. Mr. Money mistook his silence.

"It will not make you much extra work," he continued. "The book must be balanced every afternoon and the money placed in bank before it closes. You know it will give you a chance to take a little recreation during working hours."

"I have no objections in the least, but I do not like to be responsible for the money. No one knows what may happen."

"There is nothing so very serious about it. All you have to do is to balance the cash book, take the money to bank, get proper vouchers for it, and place them on file on my desk, so I can campare them with the bank-book daily."

Charles was highly flattered by the remarks made by Mr. Money. He was aspiring to a higher position and imagined he saw a "stepping stone" ahead of himself.

But the head book-keeper was an enemy to Charles and thought Mr. Money flattered him too much. He could not help expressing himself to the other clerks about it.

"Now, just look at that," said he when Charles was asked to take charge of the cash-book and the money. "It seems to me as if Mr. Money was losing his head. He would better make that fellow overseer of the office and the clerks; yes, even me."

"Hullo!" said the aged, gray-haired and white-bearded cashier as Charles placed the bank-book and money before the teller, "does Mr. Money have a new man again?"

"He asked me to take charge of the bank-book and money," answered Charles politely.

"Where is the other man?"

"I do not know."

"Mr. Money changes clerks quite frequently of late, I dare say."

"I do not know anything about it," answered Charles. "I am a stranger in the place."

"A stranger!"

"Yes, I am several weeks in the office."

"How did you manage to get a position if you are a stranger?"

"Captain Murry recommended me."

"Captain Murry of the 'Half Moon!' said the cashier, glancing at Charles. "You are a—hem— You are from New York City?"

"Yes, I resided in New York City for some time. I—"

"Well, I hope you will have better luck than some of the men have had in that office lately."

"Does he have much trouble with his men?"

"Well, yes! He has had considerable trouble with some lately."

"I thought Mr. Money was a nice man."

"So he is, but I think he places too much confidence in his men; then, again, on the least provocation he discharges them."

"I consider him a very good business man."

"So he is, but as I said—"

"Your bank-book is ready," said the teller.

Charles glanced at the book.

"My deposit slip calls for more money than you give me credit. There is a mistake somewhere."

"Yes, there was a mistake, but I corrected the deposit slip."

"But that way I would be twenty dollars short," said Charles.

"Better count the money again," said the cashier.

"The money is counted correctly," answered the teller.

"Count it again. Count it in the gentleman's presence," said the cashier.

Charles moved closer to the teller. The money was counted again. One of the notes was found to adhere to another note, and the error was corrected.

"Mistakes will happen," said Charles politely as he placed the bank-book into his pocket and left the bank.

"That was quite a mistake," said the cashier, "but the young man speaks for his rights, and I give him credit for it."

The conversation Charles had had with the cashier set him to thinking, and as he walked along toward the office, thought after thought rushed through his brain. He now feared Mr. Money and resolved to leave the place at once.

"Mr. Money," said Charles as he placed the bank-book before him. I—"

"Be seated, Mr. Moser," interrupted Mr. Money without looking up, "I want to speak with you."

"I want—"

"Just a moment."

Charles took the proffered chair. "Well, I guess the cashier's warnings are coming true already," thought he. "Why did I allow him to interrupt me? I—"

"Mr. Moser, the assistant book-keeper left. I must fill the place at once, and—"

"I—"

"Just one moment," said Mr. Money. I feel certain that by a little assistance you can do the work, and I will appoint you to the position. I will assist you for several days and—"

"I can do the work," said Charles before Mr. Money had finished speaking and before he was aware what he was saying.

"I know you can, but you will try and get all the information from the book-keeper you can; meanwhile you will assist the man who takes your place."

"What will we do with the bank-book and the money?" said Charles.

"Oh, you will take care of that until I will have some one else to take it."

Charles noticed that the book-keeper was jealous of him and that he placed all obstacles in his way that he possibly could.

One morning as Charles entered the office he was beckoned by Mr. Money to come to his desk. It was nothing unusual, for Charles had to give frequent explanations of goods loaded and unloaded; but he noticed that Mr. Money was unusually irritable and sarcastic in his manners.

"Mr. Moser," he said as he had finished some work which lay before him on his desk, "I have something very unpleasant to talk with you. It is especially disagreeable to me, but I cannot help it."

"What is it?" said Charles.

"Well, being you are so anxious to know, I may just as well tell you at once. My gold pen was lost for several days. I searched everywhere for it, but was unable to find it."

"I saw your gold pen on the desk several days ago," said Charles frankly.

"Oh, you did! Have you no idea what became of it or where I may be able to find it?"

Charles pretended not to notice the sarcasm in Mr. Money's speech.

"I have not the least idea where it is. The last time I saw it it was on your desk."

"Does he not have the slyness of a pick-pocket?" whispered the book-keeper to one of the clerks near him. "See how innocently he stands before that man and pretends not to know anything about it, and the proofs are all against him."

"Do you really think he does know anything about it? He may be entirely innocent of the theft," answered the clerk. "He always was a fine fellow to me."

"Oh, you are not so much of a block-head as that," replied the book-keeper. "Who else could have done it?"

"Yes, it was on my desk several days ago," said Mr. Money to Charles, "but I am unable to find it now. I thought being you got to my desk so frequently, you could tell me something about it."

"I know nothing about your pen," said Charles in answer to Mr. Money's sarcastic questions. Then he bethought himself. "Did you make a thorough search for it in your pockets? Sometimes—"

"Why, yes, I did."

"And you could not find it?"

"No, I could not. Mr. Moser, you seem very innocent about this affair, and I might just as well tell you that my pen was found at no other place than in the outside pocket of your coat which hangs at your desk."

Charles grasped at the desk for support. He thought the furniture in the room was reeling, and he could not talk for some time.

"Impossible!" he said when he could speak. "How did it get there?"

Mr. Money laughed sarcastically as he glanced at the book-keeper and then at Charles.

"You ought to know better than anyone else," replied Mr. Money.

Charles noticed it when Mr. Money glanced at the book-keeper again.

"But I don't know. Someone put it into my pocket and—"

"Yes, I guess someone did put it there, and you no doubt know who that particular 'someone' is."

"I know who it is. He is in this room now," replied Charles.

"I think he is. Young man, you are entirely too fresh for this part of the country. We have no further use for you here. You had better leave the office as soon as you can."

"But, Mr. Money, you are not going to discharge and disgrace me without giving me a fair trial? I demand a fair trial," he said as he advanced and fixed his eyes on the head book-keeper.

The book-keeper winced under Charles' gaze.

"You will get a speedy trial," said Mr. Money, "if you don't leave immediately. Go and get your pay and leave, or I will call a 'cop' and have you put out."

Charles said a few unintelligible words, got his money and rushed out of the room. Where he was

going he did not know. He took a lingering look down the Hudson, hoping to descry the "Half Moon," but no vessel was in sight.

No sooner had Charles left, then the book-keeper went to Mr. Money and congratulated him on his getting rid of such stock.

"I was very anxious to help you put him out of the office, but perhaps it is better as it is. No one knows what such a scoundrel might do."

That afternoon Mr. Money took the bank-book and money to the bank himself. The cashier was not busy at the time and began a conversation with him. During the conversation he inquired for Charles.

Mr. Money was still in bad humor. "He is gone to the dogs, I guess. I wish he had been there before I ever saw him."

"Why, what has happened?" asked the cashier.

"I discharged him for stealing," answered Mr. Money.

"For stealing! I declare! The same old story."

"Yes, my pen was missing several days. This morning my book-keeper found the pen in that scoundrel's pocket, and I made very little fuss and shipped him, of course."

"Too bad! Too bad!" said the cashier. "I had several pleasant chats with him and thought him a very intelligent young man. I can hardly believe that he is guilty of any theft."

"Yes, I guess he was too intelligent," said Mr. Money with a curl on his lip.

"I do not understand this," said the cashier after Mr. Money had left the bank. "There is some mystery about that office. I fear there is some party in the office that is crooked. I think Mr. Money should have been able to detect the guilty party by this time."

"Well, I declare. I—"

"What is it?" said the cashier rising to his feet and standing before the teller. He thought the teller had made some important discovery.

"I was merely going to say that I believed that I had a narrow escape with that fellow. A person cannot be careful enough nowadays. It was my intention to invite him to call at my house and accompany me to church next Sunday. It might have made a terrible ado had he accompanied me and then this crime come before the public."

"I think you really had a narrow escape. You cannot trust anyone at present, especially men who are entire strangers to you. It is a risky business even with men that you think you are perfectly acquainted with. But, understand, I am not trying to fasten a crime on this young man, for I cannot believe that he is guilty of that theft."

"Do you not believe him guilty?"

"No, I do not. He was so frank and so very particular with us that—"

"He did nothing but his duty," said the teller, who now was trying to consider Charles guilty in his mind.

"Yes, that is so, but he did it in such a way that I cannot help considering him a straightforward young man."

"I liked to converse with him. He—"

"Yes, he was a well informed young man. No doubt he got a great deal of it by his traveling."

"I tried my best to ascertain where his home was and how it happened that he strayed to this place, but all that I could ever get out of him was that he was from Pennsylvania and expected to return to his home when fortune favored him."

"But you see we have no right to fasten a crime on him until we are certain of it."

"That is true. We can sometimes judge too hastily, but it seems to me that they fastened it quite well on him. I do not understand, if he did not consider himself guilty, why he did not hire a good lawyer and demand a trial."

"Demand a trial with all the proofs so strong against him?"

"Yes."

"Well, I should not wish to be in his place, for court trials are very risky things sometimes. There is no trouble nowadays to get witnesses, you know."

The cashier was interrupted, and the conversation ended.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BOOK-KEEPER ARRESTED

AFTER the "Half Moon" had made several voyages to different localities, it again glided into the slip at Albany. Captain Murry immediately went to Mr. Money's office, but found the door locked and no one around. He drew his watch from his pocket. It was several minutes after twelve o'clock. He hastily walked to his sister's house, where he expected to meet Charles at the dinner table.

"How are you, sis'r?" said Captain Murry playfully on meeting her in the dining room.

"Gittin' along as usual—one day good, the next day bad. Not much to complain about. You see it is hard work to be raisin' three children an'—"

"Never fear, sis'r," said Captain Murry, interrupting, "they will come in nice sometime. Min' what I tell ye." Then he glanced over the table again as he said: "Where is Charlie?"

"Charlie left several days ago."

"Where did he go to?"

"I don't know, I am sure. He came home one mornin', paid his boardin' an' left the house."

"Was he cross when he left?"

"Oh, dear no! He said nare a word."

The captain made no further inquiry, because he thought that Charles had become dissatisfied with his

boarding place and had gone to some one more suitable to him.

"Howdy, Mr. Money!" cried Captain Murry, at the same time casting his eyes from clerk to clerk in quest of Charles.

"Howdy yourself!" answered Mr. Money without looking up from his work.

"Where is Charlie?" said the captain as he again glanced from right to left in the room.

"I don't know," said Mr. Money in an undertone.

"Where is he?" asked Captain Murry, surmising that something had happened.

"I don't know," again said Mr. Money in an undertone. Then he added, after a moment's pause: "I guess he went to the dogs."

"He went to the dogs!" said Captain Murry, coloring in his face. "What do ye mean?"

"I mean what I said."

Captain Murry was dumb-founded. Had he been hit with the windlass, it would not have made more of an impression on him. He could not comprehend it.

"Well, where is he anyway? Come, be decent. None of your joking," said the captain.

"Well, then, to 'be decent,' I must tell you, I suppose. The fact of it is that your best man—the man you worked on me—was shipped," said Mr. Money sarcastically.

The captain glanced around the room again. He carefully scanned the faces of all.

"What—was—the trouble?" he said in a subdued tone.

"Stealing!" hissed Mr. Money.

"Impossible!" cried Captain Murry, throwing up his hands.

"Impossible or not impossible!" said Mr. Money excitedly. "Your Mr. Moser was shipped for stealing my gold pen. He stole it from my desk, and after some searching my head book-keeper found it in the outside pocket of his coat hanging by his desk over night."

"An' ye sent him away fer—"

"That was enough to justify my actions."

"That is too bad!"

"'Too bad' or not 'too bad,'" said Mr. Money, "however it is only too true."

"It's a blamed l—," cried the captain as he hit the desk a terrific blow with his powerful fist. "'It's a blamed l—,' I tell ye. A put up job! Do ye hear that? 'A put up job it is!'"

Mr. Money was taken aback by the actions of the captain, but he immediately replied: "It's a blamed nice trick you played on me by poking one of your best men on me—a friend of yours, and—"

"An' ye—" cried the captain, interrupting.

Mr. Money, though checked, continued again: "We found that small articles were continually missing ever since he was in my office. My pen, which I prized very highly, was stolen from my desk. I had my men to make a general search for it on the sly, and the result was that my head book-keeper found it in the outside pocket of your Mr. Moser's coat which hung by his desk."

"An' ye fastened the crime on him, I dare say."

"Yes! He was under suspicion for some time by my head book-keeper, and at last we caught him."

"Ye caught him stealing?"

"Not in the act, but—"

"An' ye sent him away?" said Captain Murry partly to himself and partly to Mr. Money.

"I did. Do you think I can have a man in my office who steals everything he can lay his hands on?"

"You gave him a fair trial, I suppose?"

"Trial! I think he had trial enough. I told him to get out, and that was all there was about it. He tried to get mean; but had he not left, I would have gotten the clerks to put him out of the office."

"An' a blamed nice time ye all would have had of it. Min' what I tell ye," cried the exasperated captain. Then, fixing his eyes on the head book-keeper, he continued: "Ye all would have fooled with the wrong man, let me tell ye." Captain Murry paused, then he resumed as he addressed Mr. Money: "There was stealin' goin' on in your office before Charlie was here. Is that not so?"

Mr. Money looked at captain Murry, but made no reply. He was in a very awkward position. He could not deny it.

"Answer my question," cried the infuriated captain. "Be a man an' answer it."

"Yes," answered Mr. Money frankly, while his eyes sought the floor.

"It's a put up job on Charlie. Don't yer see? Ye are not so much of an idiot to think he would steal the

pen an' hide it in the outside pocket of his coat an' leave it hang in this old room over night. Not much. I tell ye, ye shipped the wrong man."

The clerks were greatly excited by this time. It looked very much as if Captain Murry would have to be put out of the office.

"I shipped the wrong man," said Mr. Money in an undertone to himself. He became somewhat suspicious, now that Captain Murry called his attention to it. Stealing had been going on in his office for some time, and he never was able to trace the party committing the thefts. With sudden impulses and with the aid of some of his clerks the charges were always brought against some one, and that some one was discharged without much ceremony, guilty or not guilty.

Captain Murry had expended his wrath by this time and was moving down the aisle to leave the office.

"Hold on, Johnny! Don't be going," cried Mr. Money following him.

"Johnny or no Johnny," said Captain Murry. "I'm in for the right thin'. It's a fool ye made of yerself by discharging that young man, an' I don't care to bother wid ye anymore. The idea of ye thinkin' that a young man would steal a gold pen an' hide it in the outside pocket of his coat an' leave his coat hangin' at the wall in this room, that is too thin fer me."

Mr. Money fell to thinking and began to consider the captain in the right.

"I wonder where Charlie is," he said in an undertone to the captain.

"I guess he's gone to the dogs, where some of yer other clerks ought to be," replied the captain. Then reflecting, he added in a low whisper: "Mr. Money, it's a private detictive ye want in this old place. Ye are too 'ot-headed. Ye must go slow about this. There is some one else doin' the stealin', an' the feller may be in here now fer all I know."

Mr. Money returned to his desk and resumed his work. He tried to forget Charles Moser; but do what he would, his name was always foremost in his mind. The quarrel with Captain Murry played havoc with his nerves; but, still, he kept on with his work until late in the evening. He passed a restless night, but managed to return to the office at an early hour the next morning. Being unable to do any work, he finally placed aside his books and rested his head on his hand.

"I am informed that you have charge of this office," said a young man arousing him from his sleep.

"Well, what about it?" snapped Mr. Money.

"I am informed that—"

"Well, what information have you anyway?"

"Mr. Money, I saw your 'ad' in the paper and am here to offer you my services."

"You are?"

"Yes, sir, I am. Here are my testimonials."

"And you offer me your testimonials," said Mr. Money sarcastically.

"Yes, sir. I hope you are not offended about it."

Mr. Money could not suppress a smile.

"Why, yes, I am in need of a man very badly, but what can you do, if I am not too impertinent in asking?"

"Certainly a very proper question for me to answer, and I am pleased to say that I can do any work connected with this office, that is, when I have the routine of the business."

Mr. Money nodded his head, but made no immediate answer. Then, heaving a sigh, he said: "Well, I need a man to act as checking-master and assistant on the books. Do you think you can do it?"

"I don't merely think I can do the work, but I am positive that I can."

"Well, you seem to be sure about your work. You must have had lots of experience, I dare say, especially for such a young man as you are."

"Certainly, certainly. Had lots of experience of this kind of work in New York City."

"Oh, you had!"

"Yes, sir. I acted as checking-master and assistant on the books, and afterwards took a course in bookkeeping."

"I am surprised that the people of New York City can afford to let such an expert young man leave the city."

"I am not pushed out, I want you to understand. I am trying to better myself, and—"

"And you thought you would try the country!"

"Exactly."

"Let me see. You said that you worked in New York City. It seems very strange to me that you are looking for a position up this way."

"Well, you see I am a student of nature, and—"

"The deuce you are. I thought you were looking for a position of some kind."

"So I am."

"And want to be a student of nature!"

"I do not think that it will interfere with my work as long—"

"I have an idea that if a man attends to his work in the office for an entire day, then he does not want to ramble—"

"But, you see, I would consider my rambles amongst these beautiful hills and valleys excellent exercise."

"I see you are bound on having the position, and I guess I must take you, but I would like to know one thing, and that is, do you steal?"

"Not where nothing can be found."

Mr. Money had expected to stagger the young man, but he was very much mistaken.

"Well, go," said Mr. Money. Then he hesitated. "Yes, go to the book-keeper and start in."

"How are you, Mr. Book-keeper! Very glad to meet you. I guess we can manage to get along with each other if I attend to my work."

"Yes, of course! Why not?" said the book-keeper, who was taken in very much by the glib tongue of the genteel young man. "No trouble to get along with you, I am sure."

The young man was very attentive to his work and the book-keeper had still a better opinion of him before the day was over.

In the evening, as the checking-master and the book-keeper were walking to their boarding-place, the checking-master said: "Well, where can we spend the evening in this old place?"

"Oh, I'll show you around; never fear. Glad I have some one I can associate with."

"I'm only too glad that I have some decent fellow to associate with," answered the checking-master.

Supper over, the two young men went arm in arm down the streets to see the sights.

"I suppose we can get a drink here," said the checking-master as they approached a fashionable place.

"Better go to the next place; more style about the house."

"Oh, that is alright. I hate these bum old places anyway. I like a nice, clever place."

"I tell you they put up a Manhattan in good style in this place," said the book-keeper as they entered the room and seated themselves at a small table.

"Here, waiter, bring my friend a Manhattan—a good one, understand—and for me you will bring a mint julep. Waiter, don't forget the cigars," said the checking-master.

The waiter brought the drinks and cigars. The book-keeper wanted to pay for them, but the checking-master would not stoop so low as that; not he. He

could not think of having his superior pay for the drinks. He handed a bill to the waiter, who returned soon, having the change on a silver tray. The checking-master politely waived him away. He could not stoop so low as to accept any change. The polite waiter made a bow, pocketed the money and walked away.

"Nice kind of place. Very nice place, indeed. Equal to some of the nicest places in New York City."

"I dare say so," said the book-keeper, "and you are just the man to have in company. I—"

"Fine waiters here."

"Excellent waiters. You see, they do not cater to low trade in this place. They—"

"By the way, you like your place, I suppose."

"Indeed; no other place like it," said the book-keeper.

"Good boss, I suppose."

"You bet; well, a little foolish."

"'A little foolish!'"

"Yes, but—"

"You are in his employ for some time and know all the men in the office, I suppose."

"Yes, I know them all."

"You go to New York City quite frequently, I suppose."

The head book-keeper became very talkative and gave the checking-master a long description of the places he had frequented in New York City and the men with whom he had associated.

"Waiter, another Manhattan and a mint julep."

The waiter was kind and obliging. The drinks were brought and the two friends sipped to their hearts' content.

"This is my pay," said the book-keeper as his newly made friend again tossed a bill to the waiter. "I always pay my share of—"

"Don't mention it. I think—"

"Well, indeed, you are not as green as the other man was. I tried to show him the sights several times, but the old grandmother just sat around at his boarding-place reading his Bible and repeating his prayers, and I tell you—"

"Beg pardon, you refer to the young man who was shipped, if I understand you right."

"Certainly. Who would want him around? There was nothing in him. Well, he was a good worker, but—"

"Ye mean there was no fun in him?"

"Exactly."

"You got rid of him, I dare say."

"Yes, indeed. It took some time, but you see—"

"Here, waiter. Another Manhattan and a julep. Don't forget the cigars."

The two took another drink. The book-keeper's head began to wabble and his tongue became stiff, but he began to talk still more freely.

"Well, yes, you got rid of him, but—"

"How I managed it? That was no trouble. You see, the boss was careless with his gold pen. I made it

my business one evening to work on the books after the boss and the clerks had all left. I picked up the gold pen, which was lying on the boss' desk, and placed it into the checking-master's coat pocket. You see, it worked well. It just happened that the coat was hanging at the wall. The next morning the boss was furious, and we all made a diligent search—the checking-master as well as the others. At last I looked in the coat pooket and found the pen."

"Well, I dare say he got out in a hurry."

"Hurry, that was no word for it. He left, and we never saw him since."

"But another fellow was shipped before him, and—"

"Oh, you refer to the head book-keeper?"

"Yes."

"That was fun, I tell you. You see, Mr. Money is a very queer man sometimes. One time he is foolish over a fellow and the next moment he mistrusts him. I commenced to remove some little things from the boss' desk. The boss at last began to mistrust the head book-keeper and one evening placed two ten-dollar bills on his desk. The next morning the bills were missing. A search was made and one of them found in the book-keeper's desk. The other one could not be found."

"You don't say! That is strange! What did the fellow do with the other bill anyway?"

"Oh, I managed that bill alright. All the time we were searching for the bills I had one of them in

one of my inside coat pockets—a private pocket, of course."

"That was grand, I declare. You no doubt used it?"

"Of course I did. What else did I want with it?"

After a few more drinks the two friends left for their boarding-place. The book-keeper was "top heavy," but the checking-master managed to get him along without making any disturbance.

The next morning the two friends entered the office and resumed their work. Mr. Money arrived shortly afterwards. No sooner was he seated at his desk than the checking-master confronted him.

"Mr. Money," said the checking-master, "my time is somewhat limited, and I thought I would immediately tell you that I will now arrest your head booker for a robbery in which he was implicated some time ago in New York City."

"You rascal," cried the head book-keeper as he made a movement towards an inside pocket with his right hand, "I will—"

"No, you won't," said the checking-master. "I removed that pistol from your pocket last night when you were drunk."

"Mr. Money stared at the detective, but made no answer. The checking-master then related to Mr. Money the story about the two ten-dollar bills and the gold pen.

"Please remove the scoundrel from my presence at once," said Mr. Money. "I never thought that he would be guilty of such meanness."

Mr. Money was in trouble again. There was a rush of work, and he was minus a book-keeper and a checking-master. He did not know what to do. He considered for some time, but could not come to any conclusion. He arose from his chair and began to pace the floor.

"How are you, Mr. Money?" said a familiar voice. Mr. Money turned on his heels and stared at the man. It was Captain Murry.

"Fair."

"Things not goin' well?"

"Yes, fairly well."

"You seem to be down in spirits. Any—"

"No, I am overworked."

"You must take a good rest."

"Rest," said Mr. Money sarcastically.

"Yes, of course! You have plenty of help and—"

"Yes, plenty of help, I dare say. No book-keeper and no checking-master, how am I to get along?"

"Where's your book-keeper an'—?"

"I don't know."

Captain Murry spoke some time with Mr. Money, but Mr. Money failed to mention the cause of his trouble.

"How did you git along with the young detictive?" said the captain pleasantly after a moment's pause.

"Oh, you—"

"That was a Johnny trick fer ye," said Captain Murry as he turned to leave.

"Hold on, Captain Murry," said Mr. Money, following him.

The captain turned and looked at him.

"Where is Charlie?" said Mr. Money, who now believed that Captain Murry was the man who had sent the detective to the office.

"I don't know, but I think he went to the—"

"Don't finish, captain! Don't finish!" cried Mr. Money as he retreated to the office.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHARLES IS IN A LUMBERING PLANT

"YOUS want work, eh?" said the foreman with a contemptuous smile on his face as he looked at Charles. "Shure an' its work yer want? What kin yous do anyway? Don't seem to me yous could do much. No, I don't. Yer hans look too saft."

The foreman changed his cigar stump from one side of the mouth to the other as he chewed vigorously at it. He gazed at Charles somewhat like a cat when it watches a mouse.

"School-teacher, I 'spose," he said in a meditative sort of way. "Wal, I declare, I might jest as well tell yer. We have no use fer that kind o' critter in this shebang. No foolin' 'bout it."

The foreman again shifted the cigar stump and chewed at it vigorously. "All the schoolin' the children want in these parts," he continued, "is to larn to swing the axe. Guess yous know nothin' 'bout that kind o' bizz." He stopped speaking, then resumed again: "Wal, I think that the best larnin' of all. Not much use for yer blamed 'rithmetic, readin', writin' an' spellin'. No, not much. Larn to work, sez I. Larn to work. Guess yer would make a bad show at larnin' them to swing the axe. Guess yer

would. Yer might be all right fer teachin' in the place where teachin' is needed, but yer see we have no use—" Here he again stopped speaking and thought for a moment as he again looked at Charles.

"I think yer not hard 'nough. Not much use fer the tender-foot here. Yer see, it takes a great deal o' hard'nin' fer work o' this kind."

"Wal," he again said after thinking and looking over the men in a kind of commanding way while chewing at his favorite cigar stump. "Wal, —"

Here he was interrupted by one of the working men standing near him.

"He might do 'sistin' in 'sortin' an' pilin' lumber," he said.

"Knows nothin' 'bout it. His hans are too saft," suggested the foreman in an undertone.

Charles did not know what to say. He shifted restlessly around.

"You see," said the foreman addressing Charles," "every man on this patch is expected to do a day's work. I have no 'jections ef yer wish to 'sist 'sortin' an' pilin' lumber. P'r'aps yous can git the hang on that kind o' biz in a few days. We would make yer pay 'cordin'. Yer see, no work, no pay on this patch."

"Not hard work? No?" he said in answer to Charles' surprised look. "Yer might be mistaken. I guess yer never sorted an' piled lumber afore. It might be harder 'n you think. I have no 'jections to yer tryin' if yer wish ter try. Yer see, there's nothin'

like givin' a man a chance. Never take a cent of'n a dead man's eye. Bet yer bottom dollar on't."

Here he chuckled to himself.

"Now, stranger, yous have a fair chance. Yous can wade in on Monday, ef yer wish. Yer see, tomorry afternoon will be a half-holiday fer the men o' this patch, an' next day is Sunday. That is the day the men do their huntin' an' fishin'. No work on that day, bet yer bottom dollar on't."

The foreman scrutinized Charles keenly and again chewed vigorously at his cigar stump. Charles involuntarily thrust his hand in his pocket for his bottom dollar, but found none there.

"Boardin'? Wal, yes," said the foreman in response to Charles' question. "I reckon yous can git all the boardin' yer want at one of the boardin' houses; or yous can buy yer eatables at the store an' board yersel'. Some men batch together. Ma'be yer kin git a chance to go part with some one."

"Yer will take the job? Yer will? Remember, stranger, I'll give yer this as a warnin': Yer must take care of yer own hide in this old shebang. I have no time to take care of it fer yous, an' I know the other men will not do it fer yous. Everyone must take care of his own hide, I tell yer."

"Reckon yer want boardin' afore yous begin work. Yer see, we won't let any white nigger starve here. Nary a one. I will 'low yous to git your meals an' lodgin' at the boardin' house on the company's credit until yer git started at work. No pay for boardin' in

'dvance. I guess not. I 'low yous will not have the dog-gon'd meanness to let me stick on it after feedin' yous for several days."

The independent Charles could hardly brook such talk, but he was pennyless.

The foreman saw the scowl on Charles' face. "Scuse me," he said, "fer talkin' so plain to yer. But yer see, I am 'sponsible for nigh everythin' on this patch, an' I don't like the idea of bein' taken in by every dog-gon'd rascal that comes along."

These were disheartening words to Charles, who was not a little taken aback on the greeting he received from the foreman. He was hungry, out of money, and did not know what to do. He took a general survey of everything—the brawny muscular men, the so-called store, the boarding house and the shanties standing close by. He came to the conclusion that he was amongst rough people, that the strongest man would rule, and that whoever wanted to remain there would have to rely on his strength. He glanced at his muscular arms and unconsciously said to himself: "I guess I must make the most of it. I am in for it now."

The foreman was a tall, gaunt, stoop-shouldered man, and with his cap drawn down over his ears and his long mustache sticking out at right angles with his face, was an odd-looking creature. He had spent most of his life working on saw mills and in lumber yards. He had no use for "starched-up Sunday fellows," as he called them, and was not reluctant in telling them so.

He really was in need of a man, but he doubted very much whether Charles would remain long, and could not see any use in hiring him. He was a good man at heart. He saw the dejected look on Charles' face, and really pitied him. He tried to modify his language, but in his awkwardness made matters worse.

"Now understand," he said in a kind, sympathizing way, "I have no 'jections ef yer wanter try the work; but understand, we have little use fer saft hans. Most of them are of no account."

Charles Moser had partly walked and partly beaten his way on a boat on the Erie Canal to the central part of the state of New York. He had made inquiries for work along the entire line of the canal, but was unable to secure any. At last, when all hopes to him had vanished, he was informed that he might be able to secure work at Van Dyne's saw mills several miles distant from his stopping place.

How to get on the good side of the working men was a perplexing question to him. It was a mathematical problem that required thought. However, it did not take long for his active mind to form a plan. He quickly removed his coat and vest and hung them on the limb of a small tree.

"This is a very heavy piece of timber. I will assist you," he said as he took hold by the side of one of the men. Then another and another time he assisted them as they tugged and tugged at the logs.

Charles had gained his point. The men looked on him as a happy go-lucky fellow, and he got well into their graces.

"The tender-foot is not afeerd to 'sist when he thinks it necessary," said one of the men to the foreman with a significant wink.

"A strong young man. He has a good muscle," said another person.

The foreman looked gravely at the speaker and shook his head as he said in a drawling tone of voice, "His hans are too saft. He will—"

The dinner bell now rang. The men dropped their tools and rushed to their boarding places, and the foreman did not finish the last sentence.

Charles was very hungry. He went to the tree for his coat and vest. "Where will I get something to eat?" he said to himself as he followed them with his gaze. He had merely uttered the last word, when someone spoke to him. "Come with me, stranger," said the speaker, "I will find something fer yous to eat."

Charles' heart gave a bound. He accepted the invitation, and was soon seated at the table and enjoying a hearty meal on baked beans and pork in true lumberman's style.

"Peert kind o' a fellow," remarked one of the working men to the foreman as he glanced slyly at Charles.

"No good for this shebang," answered the foreman. "His hans are too saft."

Dinner over, Charles followed the men to the mill. He again hung his coat and vest aside. He was ready for work.

"A fine fellow," said one of Charles' admirers. "He has a very good muscle."

"Oh, bosh!" said another. "Yer gone on him. Yer think he is strong. Be a little slow when the next log comes from the mill, an' I'll take the starch out of him."

The man who spoke last was considered "the strongest man on the patch," to use the language of the working men. He prided himself on having "broken down" every man that had ever taken hold of his hand-spike. He watched Charles with an evil eye.

Charles pretended not to hear the remarks the men made to each other about him. Directly another heavy piece of timber came from the mill, and the last speaker had his opportunity. He walked directly opposite Charles and smiled on him. "The stranger will be my partner," he said.

Charles noticed the mischievous look on the man's face. He would not be outdone. Quick as thought he grasped the hand-spike. It was now muscle against muscle. Both men did their very best. The rest of the laborers stood back and looked on. The piece of timber rose slowly from the ground. The advantage was with Charles. His opponent called for help. He was defeated for the first time.

The men sprang to their respective places, and the piece of timber was soon out of the way. Then with their brawny arms they seized Charles, lifted him on their shoulders and carried him around amid great rejoicing.

Charles could not help pitying the man whom he had defeated. He extended his hand to him and said: "I hope there is no offence. I bear witness that you are the strongest man I ever was matched against."

The man was somewhat elated by the compliment paid him by Charles.

"Oh, no! No offence whatever," he said as he gave Charles' hand a hearty shake. "We will have to try this over some other time."'

"I do not see much use in it, friend," said Charles. "You know it is very hard work."

"We must try the saw dust pile afore we give it up," was the answer.

All the workmen laughed heartily at the anticipated fun. Charles felt somewhat annoyed. "Well," thought Charles, "I must get the grape vine lock on him."

During the afternoon the men decided to have a general bee-hunt. They had found a bee in a hollow tree some distance from the saw mill. The bee hunt was arranged for no other purpose than to have some fun with Charles.

Soon after supper was over they emerged from the boarding-house with buckets in hands and rifles on their shoulders, all ready for their anticipated fun with "the tender-foot," as they called Charles.

"Ax the tender-foot to 'company us," said one of the men to his friends.

"Will yous go with us," said the man who was requested to ask him. "I know yous will 'njoy the fun."

"Why, yes," answered Charles, smiling. "I think I shall enjoy it. If you have no objections, I will go with you."

There were no objections, and Charles was soon among the merry crowd, dragging his tired limbs several miles along creeks and over the hills in search of the tree where the bee was lodged.

After the tree was found, the men got into a dispute about whose business it was to climb the tree and cut down the limb.

Charles was a good hand at climbing trees. He had had experience in that line while at home. He removed his coat and vest. "I will try it," he said as he made a spring for the lowest limb.

The men were astonished. "He is a mighty good han' at that. A mighty good han', I say," said one of the men as he stood back with his hands in his pockets, staring at him.

The axe was handed to Charles as he ascended the tree, and soon the limb containing the bees came to the ground with a crash. It was a great deal of fun to Charles as he sat up in the tree to see his new-made friends scramble around for the honey. He noticed some bees hanging on a small limb. He gave the limb a bump with the axe. Down went the bees. Now it was a scramble with the bees. Soon the honey was secured and the men left for their boarding-place.

On the way home Charles noticed that the men frequently held private conversations with each other. He came to the conclusion that there was some mis-

chief brewing, and he was on his guard. They had gone only a short distance on their way, when the cry was raised: "A bear! A bear!" The men placed their lanterns and guns aside and ran for the trees near by.

The cry of "bear" somewhat bewildered Charles at first, and by the time he was ready to climb a tree, the animal was so near that it would have been useless to undertake it.

Fortune favored Charles. He saw a rifle, belonging to one of the men, standing against a tree near him. He seized it and turned on the animal.

"For God's sake, Ike, don't come any nearer," cried one of the men; "the 'tender-foot' has my rifle and will shoot." The animal hastily skulked behind the nearest tree.

Charles was master of the ground. He had the laugh on them as they came down from the trees, looking rather sheepish. He could not help remarking that it put him very much in mind of some stories he had read about the habits of monkeys in South America.

An hour later Charles and his new-made friends dragged their weary limbs to their boarding-place. Charles was not sorry for the tramp he had made with the men. He felt that he had made friends instead of enemies. One thing he was certain of was that he received more credit for courage than he was entitled to.

"Come, part," said the man who had acted the part of a bear, "you will share my bed with me. I 'low you will not fear me, since yous know that I am

not a real bear. I tell yer, yous come mighty near shootin' daylight through me. I did not think yous had that much pluck. I be hanged ef I did." The man had a hearty laugh over his narrow escape.

"Hey!" said the foreman to one of the men after hearing the story about the bear. "I 'spose yous will be more keerful with the 'tender-foot' arter this. Seems to be a fellow that will not take any foolin'. He came mighty near shootin' some one, they say."

Charles could not sleep. He lay in his uncomfortable bed, with eyes wide open, looking out through the cracks in the roof at the moon and the stars. The thought of home, Mary, mother and sister was continually in his mind. He again thought of the good position he had left in New York City; and then, again, of the position he had lost in Albany by the treachery of the book-keeper.

"What will become of me?" was the question that flitted foremost through his mind. It was a question he could not answer. Hours wore on and still Charles lay awake in bed by the side of his sleeping comrade, who frequently disturbed the silence by a series of unmelodious snores. At last, to his great delight, the rising bell rang loud and clear on the still morning air.

Charles rose with the rest of the men and prepared for his morning meal. He went to the table, but could not eat. His bones ached, and he could hardly move. He noticed that the men were casting suspicious glances at him during their conversations. He felt himself out of place.

"Come, tender," said the foreman on seeing the dejected look on Charles' face. "Yous must eat or yous cannot work."

Charles made no reply to the well-meant suggestion, and the foreman again addressed him: "I guess yer liftin' so heavy yisterday made yer limbs sore. 'Spose yer not used to workin' on saw mills."

"I did not do this kind of work of late," answered Charles, "and it is somewhat hard on me. I will work until dinner time. I think that will pay my boarding. I will then leave—"

"No, yous will not leave," cried the foreman. "I need yous. Yer work was satisfact'ry yesterday. Yer may 'sist in pilin' an' sortin' lumber fer a few days. By that time I 'spect yous are more used to hard work and can get along well."

Charles walked in the direction of the saw-mill by the side of the foreman with his coat thrown over his shoulders and his pantaloons tucked in his boots in true workingman's style. He now resolved to make the most of it.

CHAPTER XIX

CHARLES WORKS AT THE SAW-MILL

THE long, dreary days that followed were full of trials for Charles Moser. Day after day and week after week he toiled under the scorching sun which shone down on him on the lumber pile. In the evenings he would drag his weary limbs upstairs to the spacious but well-filled and uncomfortable sleeping-room.

"He's jist the right kind o' man fer this biz. He takes the place o' two men—he does," said a laborer to the foreman.

"I specks he'll come roun' all right by an' by, but his hans are too saft yit," answered the foreman in his usual drawling tone of voice.

The backwoodsmen away from civilization were rude in their speech and rough in their ways. Dancing, wrestling, card playing, pitching quoits, shooting at a mark and snuffing a candle at one hundred yards distance with their rifles were their amusements during Sundays, as well as during their spare moments in week days. They would frequently poke fun at Charles about being so quiet, but he always turned a deaf ear to their taunts and took no offence.

He would frequently spend his spare moments sitting under some shady tree considering or reading some old book that had happened to stray to the place.

"He is the best man on the patch," Charles overheard one of the men say to another during a dispute one day. Charles did not know what they were talking about, but thought the reference was made to him.

"He is a little book-cranky, but he takes to his work well," was the prompt reply of the other man.

Charles was still in the habit of studying his favorite geometry during his leisure moments. Unfortunately one evening he left the book lie in the sleeping room on one of the window sills, where it was found by the head sawyer of the mill.

The sawyer was very suspicious of the book, and it was partly through this negligence and partly through the kindness shown to an infirm old woman that lived nearby that Charles came very nearly being chased out of the place with his head shaved and a coat of tar and feathers thrown over his body.

This particular old woman frequently came to the mill to get wood for fuel. The men noticed that she was in the habit of muttering to herself when at the mill, and the sawyer generally thought that he had more trouble with the machinery after she had been there than before.

"He is too book-cranky. He is. No respectable young man reads such trash," said the sawyer one day when he was out of humor.

Having his suspicions now well founded, the sawyer took great precautions day and night with the saw and machinery lest some terrible mischief might befall it—it might go up to the clouds in smoke and vapor.

One morning Charles noticed that the mill was stopped. The men were idle for some time. The foreman was out of humor and swore at the sawyer. The sawyer was furious, and in his turn swore at the foreman, but still the machinery would not move.

Charles took in the situation at a glance. He broke out in a mirthful laugh.

"Great Scott!" he cried. "Do you not see that bolt? How can the machinery run when the bolt is loose?"

This created a laugh on the sawyer. He felt insulted. He glanced at Charles with evil bodings in his eyes.

"I guess yous know more 'bout it than we do," he said, sharply.

But Charles still had many friends at the mill. A short time after he had come to the place, several men were bathing in the mill dam. One of the men was carried by the current near the over-shoot of the dam. The cry was raised: "A man drowning! A man drowning!" Charles heard the cry. He was an expert swimmer. He dived into the water, and with great exertions and at the risk of his own life brought the drowning man to the shore, while others stood on the bank, too much excited to render assistance.

But a happy day was coming for the workingmen. The militia of the several counties was summoned to a grand review. Rusty swords were drawn from their scabbards and examined; rusty fire-arms were taken from their hiding places and polished; well-worn

knap-sacks were packed with clothes, and uniforms brushed and cleaned for the occasion.

The old and young looked forward to this day, and the entire country round about turned out in their best attire to pay homage to the soldiery on these gala days.

Several men at VanDyne's mills belonged to a company and had to report for duty. The trouble about the machinery was forgotten, and the good-natured, whole-souled Charles was invited to accompany them.

It was a grand sight to Charles Moser to see the soldiers with polished muskets and scarlet uniforms march and countermarch on the parading ground with slow and measured step to the shrill sound of the fife and the rattle of the drum, while salutes were fired to "Old Glory" from cannons stationed at various places, echoed and re-echoed among the surrounding hills and mountains.

Charles was fond of military manoeuvers, and he stood like a hero watching the officers as they gave the command and the soldiers as they went through the exercises. He had held the honored position of captain of a company when he attended school, and it was almost impossible for him to keep from rustling up to the men and entering the ranks.

Suddenly in the excitement he caught his breath. He saw two well-bred horses with several military men in a carriage dash down the avenue formed by the soldiers and the citizens. The horses were unmanageable and dashed at a headlong speed into the crowd. Women screamed and fainted. Men rushed from all

directions to the aid of the gentlemen. The crowd was too great, and Charles could not get near them. He got a glimpse of one of the men. He had seen him before.

The day wore gayly on. The strains of the band grew sweeter and sweeter, and the cries of the peanut venders and the chorus of the young and light-hearted grew louder and louder. It played havoc with Charles' nerves.

The soldiers finished their exercises with a street parade and were disbanded amid the cheers of the crowd. Charles mingled with the gay and light-hearted. There were still some trials in store for him.

"Your fortune told, young friends? Tell you the past, present and future," said an old, gray-headed, long-whiskered soothsayer as Charles and his friends walked by his tent.

"We must all have our fortunes told," said one of the crowd.

Charles objected, but his objections were overruled.

"We must hear what he has to say," said another.

Into the tent they went, crowding and pushing Charles ahead of them amid roars of laughter.

"Now for the witch," cried some one.

The soothsayer looked slyly at Charles as he shuffled the cards. "Young man," he said, nodding to Charles, "divide the pack of cards."

Charles did as he was requested to do.

"Turn up the top card from any one of the heaps."

Charles followed instructions.

"Good," said the soothsayer, smiling; "you will get a legacy from some rich relative. Yes, you will be a wealthy man some time."

"That's it, Charlie!" cried his friends in unison. "Are we in for a share when it comes round?"

"That is the future," said Charles. "Now tell me the present."

"Oh, you want me to tell you the present," said the soothsayer as he again shuffled the cards. I think I can do it. Try it again."

Charles did as he was instructed.

"A young runaway, eh?" said the soothsayer, glancing at Charles from under his long eyelashes.

The crowd roared with laughter, and Charles tried to back out of the tent.

"Hold on, young man," said the soothsayer; "give it one more trial before you leave."

Charles hesitated, but his friends pushed him to his place and he again turned up the card.

"Ah! a young lady is waiting for you, but you must hurry home or—"

This unexpected utterance of the soothsayer was too much for Charles. "Oh, bosh!" he cried in his embarrassment, and rushed out of the tent into the crowd amid the shouts and laughter of his friends.

The review was over. The men trudged home and reported for work. Days, weeks and months passed by and each morning found Charles Moser trudging to his work at the mill, where he remained all day piling and assorting lumber. But he was not the gay

and light-hearted young man he had been several months before. His cheeks became hollow, he lost his appetite, and a melancholy look was in his eyes.

The foreman attributed Charles' ailments to overwork. "Poor fellow!" he would frequently say to the men. "He is not used to this kind of work. His muscles are too saft. I must give him somethin' else to do."

"What did he work afore he came here?" inquired some of the men.

"Don't know. Cant't find out. Did some clerkin', I 'spose."

"He is readin' that blamed ol' book of his'n all the time—he is. Why doesn't he sit down in the evenin' an' rest like other workin' men do? A book is a bad thin' for anyone to read after a hard day's work. It weakens the nerves—it does," said the sawyer. Then, talking in a more confidential tone, he said: "Look at that ol' book with its—" He stopped, for he lacked words to express himself.

"Tender-foot 's sick," said Charles' partner with eyes wide open one morning. "Did not sleep a wink last night. He's entirely off—he is."

The foreman immediately went to Charles' sleeping apartment. Charles was delirious. He would at times call for his mother and Mary. Then, again, he would stare wildly around as if in search of someone and declare that he never stole that pen.

"Well, boys," said the foreman, pulling his long, bristling whiskers, "tender-foot 's sic' an' somethin' must be done fer him."

At that moment Charles made a violent effort to rise. "I never stole the pen," he cried wildly.

"Och, now, Charlie! Lie down. We all know that you don't steal," said the foreman kindly to him as he tried to hold him down.

Charles made another violent spring, at the same time crying: "I never—" He did not finish. He sank down on his couch exhausted.

"I guess, boys," said the foreman, casting a glance at the men in the room, "this young feller is in fer a long spell o' sickness, an' we will better git the 'doc'. Some one will go fer him, I 'spose?"

The doctor's home was some miles distant from the mill, and it was an unusual thing to have him come to this out-of-the-way place.

"Who is sick in this shebang?" said the doctor to the foreman as he dismounted from his horse and removed the saddle-bags.

"One of the workin' men."

"How long has he been sick?"

"Got sick durin' the night."

"Very sick young man; very sick young man," said the doctor after taking a good look at Charles. "Guess he is down with the fever and will have a long siege of it. Better have him moved to some comfortable place away from the men."

"Think he's got the fever?" said the foreman, pulling violently at his long mustache.

"No doubt about it; no doubt about it," answered the doctor.

"Not a bit of fever," said the sawyer. "It is nothin' more than readin' that blamed ol' book. He sits day an' night bothering 'bout that blamed trash. No wonder he is out of his min'."

"I can have him removed to the shanty over yander," said the foreman, at the same time pointing in the direction of a small building.

"Let's take a look at it," said the doctor. "Where is the young man from?" inquired the doctor as they walked along together.

"I really don't know. I never could find out."

"Been working here for a long time?" asked the doctor.

"Quite a time. He's a mighty good workman."

"This place will do," said the doctor; "it is as good as can be expected here."

"Think it's not good 'nough?" said the foreman, showing plainly that he did not like the way the doctor expressed himself.

"Yes, it will do; but remember, the young man must have good nursing if he is expected to pull through. Had—you—not—"

"He shall have good nursing," said the foreman, interrupting.

During the long, dreary hours of the nights the foreman took his turn to watch by Charles' roughly-made but comfortable couch, nursing him with all the tenderness he was possessed of.

But the sawyer was dissatisfied and swore that he would take no turns with the other men in caring for

Charles. The foreman pleaded with him, but he was obstinate.

"Come," said he to the sawyer, "you must take your turn watchin'. He is a human bein', an' if he is a—"

The foreman did not finish speaking, for the sawyer interrupted him.

"Has no business with that ol' book," he said as he turned away. "Let him read books that other people—" The remaining words were lost to the foreman.

All the men with the exception of a very few took their turns caring for Charles.

Days and nights wore slowly on. The doctor called frequently, and Charles was on the way of recovery.

After all the determination the sawyer could muster, he could not refrain from inquiring about Charles. He knew that the other men were constantly caring for Charles and nothing happened to them, why should he be the unlucky one?

The foreman again interceded with him, and the sawyer took courage and went into the room. He walked to the bed and looked at Charles, but to his horror the book lay on the window sill before him by Charles' side.

"M—m—m—that ol' book," he said to himself and hastily withdrew from the room to the amusement of the others. Charles was not bothered with him during the remainder of his illness.

CHAPTER XX

COLONEL MUSSER PREPARES TO GO TO NEW YORK CITY

AT the time Charles Moser was at the lumbering camp and worrying about home, mother and Mary, Colonel Musser was very busy with his farms and other business transactions. Frequently he thought of Charles Moser and pondered about the old cane. A number of times he took the old cane from its hiding place and gazed at it, conjecturing what might be the outcome of it.

One evening Colonel Musser came home after a hard day's work and immediately entered the drawing room, where a gentleman awaited him. He was tired and down in spirits, but he greeted the gentleman pleasantly. After a few moments' conversation he rang the bell and summoned one of his servants.

"Maggie," said he when she entered the room, "I guess a good smoke will quiet my nerves. Bring some cigars for myself and the gentleman."

"What kind of cigars would de Culumn an' his frien' like to have!" said Maggie in her quaint language.

"Bring one of the boxes having the picture of General Scott on the lid," said he. Then, considering a moment, he called to her: "Maggie, bring one of the boxes bearing the picture of General Taylor. They are a milder cigar."

Maggie courtesied and left the room. In several minutes she returned with the cigars. "Does de Culumn an' his frien' want some wine? I think a little wine will be good for de Culumn's nerves."

"No," said Colonel Musser, with a smile, "my friend never drinks wine, and for my part I am not so very fond of it myself."

The Colonel and the gentleman chatted pleasantly for some time. They were considering some business propositions.

"Come, come, Colonel," said the gentleman at last, "you must decide now whether or not you will consider that proposition on the bank stock."

"I fear it may not be a safe investment."

"I think it a good investment, but you must do the paying and deciding," said the gentleman. "I placed all the facts before you."

The Colonel was puzzled. He mused for a moment, as was his habit. "Well—I—guess—I—must—try—my—luck—dollar," said he very slowly as he drew a silver dollar from his pocket and tossed it to the ceiling.

It was the Colonel's custom to toss up a silver dollar when he was unable to decide about some business matters.

"Well, I declare," said he after looking intently at the dollar as it lay on the floor before him. "I must really invest some money in the proposition."

The gentleman smiled. "Then you will take some of the stock?" he said.

"The game is decided against me. I must buy some of the stock."

"How many shares will you take, colonel?"

"I will take ten shares."

"Oh, that will never do," said the gentleman, who was aspiring to a position in the bank. "They expect you to take twenty shares and then make you president of the bank."

"And you cashier," said Colonel Musser, smiling. Then, pausing a few moments, he added: "'I may just as well take twenty shares for friendship's sake."

The gentleman prepared an agreement and Colonel Musser signed it. "There!" said he, "I hope that will—"

"Will make Colonel Musser president of the bank and me cashier," interrupted the gentleman as he picked up his papers and prepared to leave.

"Hold!" said Colonel Musser, placing his hand on his friend's shoulder, "do you know of any good investment that I can make in some stock in New York City?"

"There are always chances to make investments in New York City—some good and some poor, of course—but I do not know of any just now."

"You consider them all good investments, I suppose?"

"Well, I don't know about that. Some investments in silver mines turned out badly enough, indeed."

Colonel Musser blushed. "Well, a man must always expect that he may get beaten sometimes," he

said. Then he added in an undertone: "I am expecting to go to New York City in a few—" Suddenly the colonel's attention was drawn to the library. He overheard loud talking and laughing. This was something unusual. He tiptoed cautiously to the door and peeped into the room. His three colored servants, Billy, Dinah and Maggie, were playing at soldiers, and were having a lively time. Billy was band-master, Dinah was Cupral Ray and Maggie was Culumn Musser.

Maggie had an old sword in her hand and was giving the word of command, while Dinah was parading with the old cane.

The colonel stood at the door for some time. Finally he pushed it wide open and entered the room to the astonishment of the three.

Billy rushed out of the room into the hallway, where he kept out of sight.

"Golly, dere am de Culumn," said Maggie in an undertone. Do yer see 'im?"

Dinah was not so badly frightened as Maggie," and turned to a ruse to help her out of trouble. She quickly held up the cane to the Colonel's view.

"Here, Culumn, am de stick you hab from dem country boy," she said. "I found him behin' de bookease. Maggie, she want to put him in de wood-pile an' use him fer fire-wood."

This roused Maggie's ire. She feared that Dinah would get her in trouble by telling on her.

"Taint so!" she cried. "I tole Dinah de ol' stick was not worf a cent, an' some time would be thrown on the wood-pile fer fire-wood."

The Colonel made no immediate reply, for Charles Moser was directly in his mind. He could not forget the young country boy from whom he had received the cane.

"Hit's of no good here," said Maggie. "Better—"

"No, indeed," said the Colonel indignantly, "I will not allow anyone to throw that old cane on the wood-pile. I believe that it is an old relic and that someone will call for it sometime. Place it behind the book-case, where you got it. It does no harm there. It would be a pity to burn it. It might be of use to someone," said the Colonel in a somewhat commanding tone.

"Golly, yer great off'n ol' relicks," said Maggie, laughing.

"I am not so overly fond of them. At least I never made much fuss about this cane," he said.

Colonel Musser had lots of patience with these illiterate black people, as he called them. He was quick-tempered. He did not like his superiors to dictate to him, much less his inferiors. But there was a reason for his being so kind to them. He, with others, had spirited them away from their masters in the South and was under a solemn pledge to his accomplices to protect and constantly provide for them.

Colonel Musser having given his instructions to his servants about the cane, turned and looked about the

room. On every side were old muskets, rusty swords, army flags and pictures of battles in which he had participated. A life-size portrait of General Taylor, "Old Rough and Ready," as he was called, and under whom he had served while in the army, stared at him from among the portraits of other generals. But there was a portrait of a young man in full bloom of health dressed in the uniform of his country hanging near him. Colonel Musser looked at the portrait long and earnestly. It was the picture of his son.

"Yes, such is fate," said he to himself at last. "Plenty of money, plenty of everything and to spare, but no child in this wide, wide world to cheer and comfort me in my old age. What am I working and saving for anyway?"

"Beg pardon," said his wife, who had just entered the room and overheard him. "Do you not live in hopes of meeting your son again?"

"I hope so."

"Do you not feel sure that your son will greet you when you—"

"Yes," answered Colonel Musser, interrupting her, but what am I—"

"What are you working for? Are you not working and saving for some good cause?"

"I hope so."

"You hope so? Then you are not certain. Can you not place your confidence in your Maker, and believe and trust that all that you have is for some good purpose?"

"Yes, it is for some good purpose, provided I make proper use of it."

"Have you not a good, strong mind, which tells you how to make good and proper use of your money and other property?"

"Yes, and I think I have everything alright. My will gives full instructions of how I wish my property to be disposed of and—"

"Then you are relying on other men to attend to your duties after you are gone—the duties which you should have attended to yourself."

"Partly."

"Do you consider that a safe plan?"

"Well, it is the best plan that I can follow, I think."

"I do not agree with you," said his wife. "I think you are making a sad mistake. Never leave to others what you can do yourself."

"You spoke several times about making bequests to some poor families and several small, struggling churches in this vicinity. Why do you not attend to these matters yourself and feel certain that it is done according to your wishes?"

"You are right, my dear," said Colonel Musser, bowing low. "I will attend to all my business affairs properly as soon as I return from New York City."

Mrs. Musser noticed the dejected look on her husband's face, ceased from making any further remarks, and a very unpleasant subject to Colonel Musser was dropped.

But Maggie was out of humor with Billy for running away. He was sitting in the hallway as she passed by.

"Take your big feets out of the way," she said. "I have no use for lazy niggers."

Billy quickly tucked his feet under the seat. "Now I guess you can pass by," he said.

"Yes, sir, but there is little place," said Maggie, sarcastically.

Mrs. Musser, who happened to hear the conversation, said pleasantly: "Well, Billy, Maggie is very cross at you. She—"

"She may git good again," said Billy, gruffly. "I'm just as good as she."

"Billy, I know that Maggie will forgive you for running out of the room, but you must speak to her first."

Dinah had very little to say. She thought Maggie and Billy both too quick-tempered.

In a few days Maggie forgave Billy, and the little quarrel between them was forgotten, although Billy said that it was very rough to be called lazy when every one knew that he was always attending to his duties well.

CHAPTER XXI

CHARLES GETS THE POSITION OF BOOK-KEEPER AT THE MILLS

WHEN Charles resumed his work at the mill he was thin, weak and pale, and unable to perform his part with the other men. The foreman feared that Charles would have another attack of the fever if he continued at the work and was continually on the alert to get some other position for him.

The long wished for opportunity came one day. The clerk in the store left unexpectedly, and no one was there to attend to the wants of the men.

The foreman immediately thought of Charles.

"I can git a man fer yous," said he to Mr. VanDyne, who happened to come to the mill that day. "I have a very good man at the mill. I know he can do the work."

"Let us go and see him," urged Mr. VanDyne. "I must leave for home as soon as possible. I have very little time to spare."

"Come down, Mussey! Come down!" cried the foreman to Charles, who was busy at his work piling lumber.

"Mussey," said the foreman as Charles drew near, "the clerk at the store left, an' I thought perhaps yous might want the place."

Mr. VanDyne now spoke to Charles. "Yes," he said, "the clerk left unexpectedly and I must secure a

man for his place at once. The man must be able to attend to the store, make out weekly reports from the mill, get the pay-roll ready for pay-day and assist me in paying the men. Do you think you can do it?''

''I can tell you in a short time, if you will allow me to take a look at the books.''

''Certainly! certainly!'' answered Mr. VanDyne. ''You are perfectly at liberty to look at them.''

''I can keep the books,'' said Charles after looking over a number of pages, ''but—well—''

''I knew yous could keep them, Charlie,'' cried the foreman, ''or I would not have recommended yous.''

''I can keep the books,'' said Charles, ''but I will be frank with you. I know nothing about the store business.''

''That's nothing so serious,'' said Mr. VanDyne.

''Well, it may—''

''You surely can tend the store. I know yous can,'' said the foreman.

''I will try it, Mr. VanDyne,'' said Charles.

''That's the way to talk,'' said Mr. VanDyne, who was favorably impressed with Charles. ''A man that will try will succeed, you know.''

''Of course he will succeed,'' chimed in the foreman.

''Mr. Moser,'' said Mr. VanDyne after a moment's pause, ''I will send you a man who is acquainted with the books. He will assist you several days, and if you are able to keep them, then I will employ you permanently.''

"No use bothering 'bout that," cried the foreman. "Charlie kin do the work; I know he kin."

Charles was hired immediately.

"Well, I declare," said the sawyer, who overheard the conversation; "does Mr. VanDyne intend to put that fellow in the store? Why don't he make him cashier of his bank? What good will he do in the store, lyin' broad on his back an' readin' that blamed ol' book?"

"Don't yous thin' he can keep the books?"

"I speck he's able to sell tobacco, molasses an' bacon."

"How about the books?" queried the other man, who wanted a little fun with the sawyer.

"Oh, well! I specks Mr. VanDyne will have to be here most of the time to 'sist him; but yer see the foreman is in his favor, an' that settles it. His word is gospel with Mr. VanDyne. No doubt there'll be another runaway afore long," answered the sawyer with a significant look.

"But he is a good man, an'—"

"Yes, all men are good if they are in the graces of the foreman," replied the sawyer angrily. "But take me word fer it, there'll be a fuss here sometime between now an' next Christmas."

Charles was not the happy man the foreman expected him to be after securing the position, and he frequently inquired the cause, but never received a satisfactory answer.

One evening Charles was sitting in front of the store, his elbows resting on his knees and his face in

his hands. His thoughts were set on a more difficult proposition than his geometry contained. He was thinking of home and friends. He had had ample time during his long convalescence to think over his rash acts, and he bitterly repented of them.

"Charlie," said the foreman, who accidentally saw him sitting.

Charles made no answer.

"Are you sic', Charlie," said the foreman, bending over him.

Charles looked at him in a dazed manner. "No, I—"

"There's somethin' wrong with yous ol' boy. I guess yous are pining about home an'—"

"That has nothing to do with my being sick," spoke up Charles. "I mean—I—am—not—"

"Now, Charlie, yous might jist as well tell me your trouble," said the foreman. "Perhaps I can 'sist you."

Someone had imparted the story of the soothsayer to the foreman, and he resolved to have a talk with Charles the first time an opportunity afforded him to do so.

"I have no trouble. I never said that I had any trouble," replied Charles.

"I don't know as yous did say that yous had trouble, but yous look very much down in spirits. There is somethin' wrong, an' I thought yous might jist as well tell me as not."

Charles glanced anxiously around.

CHARLES MOSER AND THE FOREMAN.
"Are you sic', Charlie?" said the foreman, bending over him.

"There is no one nigh," said the foreman, "an' yous know that I am rock bottom on what yous tell me."

Charles looked the foreman full in the face. It was the look of a man in trouble.

"Charlie," said the foreman in a confidential sort of way as he drew nearer to him, "I will give you good, fatherly 'dvice. Pack up your duds an' go home. It's the best thin' yous kin do. Mark me words. Yous may regret it ef yer will remain away from home." Then the foreman bethought himself for a moment, at the same time revolving the tobacco he had in his mouth in a mechanical way. "I made jest sich a fool o' mysel' as you do. The girl I left at home is now married an' gits along well, an' I am here in this wilderness pining my life away without—"

Before he had finished speaking, Charles stood before him, grasping both his hands. "I will leave as soon as I possibly can. I have been wanting to go home this long time, but somehow I never could get ready to go."

"Is it the cash yous need to go?"

Charles hesitated a moment, then he answered: "Yes."

"Oh, Lordy!" said the foreman. "Git ready as soon as yer kin."

"Yes, but—"

"Never min'. Git ready to go."

The raft destined for Albany several days later contained one man more than the required crew.

"Now min' what I tell yous, Charlie," cried the foreman when the raft was nearing the middle of the stream, "push suit when yous come home." Then, turning sadly away, he said to himself: "I thin' I gave him good 'dvice. I kin speak from experience. I wish someone had spoken that way to me afore I came to this part o' the country."

Charles was delighted with the scenery as he floated down the river on the raft. He would frequently join the men in their sports as they sat by themselves enjoying the cool evening breeze. He was in high glee. He was on his way home.

"Mussey, remove your coat an' boots," said one of the crew one day. "We are nearing the rapids. It is a very dangerous place, an' no one knows what may happen."

Charles did as he was told to do. The raft soon went faster and faster among the foaming, rushing waters; now and then striking, and then, again, being wedged between huge bowlders. Just as the men thought that all danger was past, the raft struck a huge bowlder and was rent in twain. By the greatest exertions the two parts were brought alongside each other in an eddy and united.

Charles' experience on the raft, though of short duration, was a terrible one, and he resolved not to venture any farther.

"Mussey, where yer goin'?" cried the crew on the raft when Charles prepared to leave.

"Going home," replied Charles with a smile.

"Goin' to walk 'cross the neck to 'bany?"

"Yes."

"Better wait an' go with us. We will reach j'bany in a few days."

"No, indeed! No more rafting for me. It is too slow a business for me."

"Thought it went fast 'nough fer yer tother day."

"So it did, but, you see, other times it goes too slow."

"Better stay with us. It is a long and lonesome way 'cross the neck."

"No," answered Charles with a smile all over his face, "I am in a hurry and can't afford to lose time."

Charles slung his valise over his shoulder, waved the men good-bye and struck out into the woods, following the path indicated to him by one of the crew.

Towards dusk he reached a small log cabin located by a beautiful stream in an out-of-the-way place and occupied by an elderly man and his wife.

"How far have I to the nearest hotel?" inquired Charles as he entered the room which served the occupants for kitchen, dining room and sleeping room.

"Be the powers, me young man," answered the old lady, "you have a right smart distance."

"How far is it?"

"I don't know, but it is several hours' brisk walk."

By this time the old lady's husband entered the room and Charles asked him the same question.

"Sure, an' ye have several hours' brisk walking afore ye reach the place."

Charles was tired and hungry.

"Will you kindly give me something to eat," said he, casting a glance at the set table. "I will pay you for it."

"Yes, an' if ye wait a short time, ye can sup with us," said the man, at the same time turning to his wife with a questioning look on his face.

Supper over, Charles prepared to leave, but was informed by the man that the path led along dangerous places, and that he could not think of leaving at so late an hour.

"Ye will stop over night with us," said the gentleman. "We will give ye a nice, clean bed in the attic. Ye can rest well over night an' in the mornin' ye can start on your way at an early hour."

During the evening Charles and the gentleman conversed on many subjects. The gentleman claimed to have visited the largest cities and the most interesting places in all Europe. Charles questioned him about many places of interest. He found the man ready to answer. He seemed to know every nook and corner in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome and Venice.

The man noticed the bewildered look on Charles' face.

"You like music," said he suddenly, dropping the subject and walking to an old chest and bringing forth a bag-pipe.

Immediately it dawned on Charles' mind why it was that the gentleman was so well informed.

Charles left at an early hour. The path led through a ravine and thick underbrush. As he walked along there was a rustling among the bushes by his side. He turned his face toward the place from whence the sound came. He started back with affright when he found himself unexpectedly confronted by two ruffians.

"Hands up!" sounded sharp and clear on his ear.

Charles felt a shudder passing through his frame. He involuntarily reached for his inside coat pocket, but had nothing to defend himself with.

"Hands up or you are a dead man," cried the robbers in unison, at the same time leveling their rifles at him.

Charles was at a disadvantage and unable to defend himself. The men searched his pockets, but found no money.

"He has money somewhere," said one. "It may be in his valise. Open it."

Charles' heart turned a somersault within him, and he began to grow pale at the mention of the valise.

The robbers laid their rifles aside and began to search the valise. Charles braced himself up, preparing to make a spring for the rifle nearest him.

"None of that," said one of the robbers on seeing Charles in the very act of springing upon him.

"Oh, that is a snug sum of money," said the robbers, taunting Charles. "You are the very man we were looking for."

They bade Charles pass on, dashed into the woods, and were seen by him no more.

CHAPTER XXII

CHARLES MEETS COLONEL MUSSER AND WIFE

A DEJECTED looking young man wandered aimlessly along the dreary country road not far distant from the home of Colonel Musser. He did not care whither he went, for life was a burden to him. He occasionally stopped and listened as he imagined that he heard the sound of footsteps as of some one following him.

Finally he turned aside from the road and followed the narrow, winding path as it led along the hill and by a deep, rugged ravine by a small creek.

The creek flowed swiftly along, rushing and falling over the rapids in its channel beneath, sending forth its musical tones. Now and then he raised his eyes and looked over the distant landscape as it lay before him. But what was its beauty to him? Nature always so dear to him now seemed strange and repulsive.

He approached a huge overhanging bowlder. He stopped and looked into the chasm beneath.

"A momentary pang," he thought, "and all trials and troubles will be over."

It was Charles Moser, and he was seeking a secluded place with the fixed intention of committing suicide.

He heard a bird warbling in the trees above him. He turned and listened to the clear, pure notes.

Presently he heard the clattering of hoofs and the cries of someone in distress.

Looking out from behind the bowlder where he was sitting, he beheld two horses with a carriage and several occupants coming around the curve of the road and rush madly towards the brink of the precipice.

All thought about himself was now forgotten. He rushed out and with a terrible effort grasped the bridle of the horse nearest him. It was not too soon. A moment more, and horses, carriage and occupants would have plunged into the chasm below. The horses reared and plunged forward, but the grip of a strong hand was on them.

The sudden check of the vehicle caused Colonel Musser, wife and driver to take a sudden and unexpected exit out of the carriage into the bushes, and on the ground and rocks.

Colonel Musser sprained an ankle, Mrs. Musser had bruises in her face and several slight cuts on her head. Billy fared better, but was seriously scared.

Kind-hearted Charles forgot about his determination to commit suicide, and rendered all the assistance he could to the party.

"Thank heaven that you are not seriously hurt," he said to Mrs. Musser in his kindest way as he took her handkerchief and wiped her face.

"I think it is bad enough as it is," replied she quite pettishly. "A sad looking object I must be with my face all scratched open, my hair all disheveled, my eye-glasses broken, and my dress all soiled and torn.

I told my husband not to trust those horses to Billy, for he knows that he is not a safe driver."

"It might be worse," said the well-meaning Charles. "You were all very fortunate."

The old lady relented immediately. She was very sorry for speaking so hastily.

"Indeed! Indeed! We were very fortunate. Providence must have sent you here to save us from a horrible death. You almost sacrificed your own life. We cannot thank you enough for your kindness," she said.

"I am very glad that I could render you these services," said Charles with a faltering voice. "You will be over this in a few days."

Charles turned his attention to the horses and the vehicle. The harness was broken and required repairing. The carriage was righted by the aid of some persons who had come to the assistance of Charles and Billy, and after some time of hard labor everything was ready for the Colonel and his wife to return home. The visit to the metropolis was postponed for the present time.

"Invite the young man to accompany us home. The horses are very much excited. Billy is very nervous, and it will be a task for him to manage them," whispered Mrs. Musser to her husband who was now ready with a number of coins in his hand to pay the men.

"Oh, yes, that is just right!" said Colonel Musser to his wife. "He is a kind and obliging young man. I am glad you made the suggestion. He must come

home with us and spend the remainder of the day at our place. It would really be unkind of us not to invite him to go along."

"Here, young man," cried Colonel Musser to Charles, who was leaving, "you must accompany us home and spend the remainder of the day with us. Jump into the carriage and drive along."

Charles hesitated.

"Jump in, young man," said the Colonel. "Don't hesitate. You are welcome to go along."

Charles entered the carriage. He took a good look at the Colonel and his wife. "How familiar those faces seem to me," thought he. "I am certain I met those people somewhere before."

Charles was nervous and frequently looked anxiously about as if somewhat in quest of something, but as frequently resumed his musings.

Colonel Musser and his wife regained their composure and chatted freely with each other about their escape and some other incidents that had happened during their morning drive. They noticed that Charles was nervous, and they endeavored to entertain him.

"The scenery is beautiful along the creek. I presume you are very fond of it," said Mrs. Musser very pleasantly to him.

Charles tried to smile, but it was impossible for him to do so.

"I am very fond of—" Charles could not finish, for a lump had gathered in his throat.

"I noticed that the scenery is very delightful from the place where we had intruded so unexpectedly upon

you. Indeed, I am very fond of nature myself. There is nothing that I enjoy better. Do you visit this place frequently in your rambles?"

Charles glanced nervously at her. He was unable to speak. Suddenly one of the horses shied at an object and made a jump to one side. Involuntarily Charles thrust out his hand and caught hold of the lines.

Charles became very attentive to the horses, and Mrs. Musser not wishing to molest him, did not repeat the question, to the great satisfaction of Charles.

In due time they reached the Colonel's home, and Charles considered himself free from further questions.

"Fur de Lawd's sake! De Culumn am dead," cried Maggie to Dinah at the top of her voice as she beheld Charles and Billy leading him along the walk.

"Oh, bother! Just listen to that. She will have the entire town out if she keeps on at that rate. Tell her to go to the house and keep quiet," he said.

"You must not mind that," said Mrs. Musser." "She means it well and expresses herself as she understands it."

"Oh, well, then let her talk! It does no harm, and she must have some way to pass the time. She may just as well pass it by talking," he said somewhat pettishly.

Maggie and Dinah rendered all the assistance they could. Maggie, in her dilemma, thought of the old cane. She bounded into the library for it, but in her excitement was unable to find it. "Where am dat ol'

cane?'' she said to herself on emerging from the house.

After some exertions Colonel Musser was deposited in his arm-chair in the library.

Maggie, in spite of herself, could not avoid speaking to Billy. ''Golly, Billy, Ise so glad you is not hurt,'' she said as she gently laid her hand on his arm.

Billy stood back and scowled. He could not forgive the rude remarks she had made to him.

''Oh, yer needn't look dat way at me. Ise jist as good as yersel'. I takes no insult from nobody,'' she said, flashing her dark eyes on him. ''Yer will want to talk to me sometime, but yous can do as yer please,'' she added as she bounded on.

Billy repented of his rashness. He was as contrite as a lamb. The little quarrel that had existed between them was forgotten, and the two were again firm friends.

Charles was annoyed by the many questions with which Colonel Musser and his wife plied him. In his dilemma he frequently stared out of the window on the lawn. Life was a burden to him, and he frequently wished for the secluded spot along the stream where Colonel Musser and team had so unceremoniously intruded on him.

''I hope you will improve rapidly and be able to make your proposed trip to the city,'' said Charles, at the same time extending his hand. ''I will leave and—''

''What!'' said Colonel Musser, ''you must not think of leaving now. Dinner is almost—''

"You must not leave now," said Mrs. Musser, interrupting on entering the room. Dinner is almost ready. You no doubt are hungry after your rambles and caretaking of us wounded people; besides, papa and I shall be pleased to have you relate some of your adventures to us."

"You will better remain with us over night. You are entirely welcome to do so," said Colonel Musser, who had taken a liking to Charles. "I—"

Maggie entered the room and interrupted the conversation. "Come to dinner," she said, pleasantly. Then, turning to the Colonel, she grasped him by the arm.

"Mercy, be a little easy. You will hurt him," cried Mrs. Musser.

"Hurt 'im! De kinnon balls could not hurt 'im. How kin I hurt 'im?"

Colonel Musser could not suppress a smile.

"Well, Maggie, I am hurt this time," he said.

Maggie lost all control of herself. "Will de Culumn die?" she asked, the tears gathering in her eyes.

"Oh, no, Maggie! I am not hurt so very seriously. I will be around in a few days."

"An' dey will not take Billy an' Dinah an' Maggie away from dis home."

"Maggie, you and Dinah and Billy will be well cared for if I die."

"But you will not die now?" queried Maggie, not being satisfied in her mind.

Charles glanced nervously around when he reached the dining room with its frescoed walls adorned with fine paintings and the table decked with expensive silverware.

"De young gen'man will sit by de side of the Culumn," said Maggie.

"Now, Maggie," said Colonel Musser, smiling, "give us plenty to eat. I am very hungry after my adventure, and I expect the rest are the same."

"How is Billy?" said Mrs. Musser, addressing Maggie.

"Oh! Ise don't know," answered Maggie with a shake of her head. "Billy's mad at me."

"You must take good care of him, for he is badly scared."

"I guess he's got to help hissel'," said Maggie.

Charles felt miserable in his new situation. He spoke mechanically to the Colonel and his wife. He could not realize what he was saying. He longed for out-of-doors as a caged bird longs for its freedom.

"De young gen'man must take another muffin," said Maggie, who prided herself on her cooking. "Ise buttered 'em very well. Here am de honey. You can put 'em on as you lake."

"You must not be annoyed by her talk. She means it well. She is a good girl. Sometimes she is a little quick-tempered, but she gets over her little spells in a short time," whispered Mrs. Musser to Charles when Maggie had left the room to get another supply of muffins.

Supper over, Colonel Musser, wife and Charles withdrew to the drawing-room.

"Be seated," said Colonel Musser, "Maggie will bring some cigars, and we can then chat and enjoy a smoke with each other."

"I wish to leave. I see that—"

"Oh, you must not think of leaving now. Maggie will bring some cigars, and we will enjoy a good smoke and have a little chat."

At that moment Maggie entered the room, but instead of having the anticipated cigars, she flourished the old cane.

"Here am de ol' cane, Culumn," cried she. "I found 'im at last. Hit comes in nice just now."

Charles' heart gave a bound as he beheld his old treasure. "That is my cane," he blurted out before thinking what he was saying.

Colonel Musser pretended not to understand him. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"This is my cane," said Charles, rising and reaching for it. "I gave it to—"

"Young man, I don't understand you. This cane belongs to me. You—"

"I gave it to you in the city when I was in trouble with—"

"In what city?" asked Colonel Musser, interrupting.

"In New York City," answered Charles.

Colonel Musser gazed at Charles in astonishment. He could not believe that the young man now before

him was the once oddly dressed young man from whom he had received the cane.

Mrs. Musser was as much excited as her husband, but on the contrary thought that she saw a resemblance in the young man to the one they had met in the train.

"How do you mean to say that this cane came into my possession?"

Charles related his adventures in the city, and how he and the Colonel were arrested.

"Who told you this story?" inquired the Colonel, for he was very cautious and did not wish to accept a story which the young man might have heard related somewhere and was now using to an advantage. It might be a put up job.

Mrs. Musser with true womanly instinct did not think as her husband did. She listened attentively to Charles. She questioned him about the meeting in the train and the country through which they had passed.

"What is it, Maggie?" said Colonel Musser to her on noticing that she was waiting to be recognized.

"Dare am some gen'men in the library," she said.

"Bring the gentlemen into the drawing-room. No, one moment. How many are there—two or three?"

"A lot of 'em," replied Maggie.

"Dear me, what are they after, anyway?" said Colonel Musser. "Come, young man, we must go to the library to meet my friends."

"I want to leave. I—"

"Oh, you cannot think of leaving now. You will remain with us over night. I want to talk with you. Come, we must go." So saying he offered his arm to Charles, and the two walked together to the library.

"I believe that he's the identical young man we met in the train," said Mrs. Musser to herself.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHARLES AT COLONEL MUSSER'S HOME

"HOW did the young man conduct himself before those gentlemen?" asked Mrs. Musser of her husband.

"He was polite and conducted himself as becoming a gentleman. But the most singular thing to me was, when anyone mentioned the accident, he became very indifferent. I am not the only one who noticed it. Several of the party made mention of the fact to me. In spite of my liking the young man, I cannot help being suspicious of him."

"I do not see why you should be suspicious of him," answered Mrs. Musser.

"That may be as it pleases. I think he always acts so very queer when the place of our unexpected meeting is mentioned in his presence."

"Do you doubt his story about the cane?"

"Well, I really do not know what to say about it. I cannot help thinking that he is the very young man, but still we must be very cautious. Someone—"

"The young man's story is correct," said Mrs. Musser, interrupting. "No one that was not by could have answered the questions I asked of him as he did."

The Colonel agreed with his wife, but again suggested that he was an entire stranger to them, and

that they would be very careful with him, for no one would know what his intentions were.

"But I see nothing in his demeanor towards us to cause suspicion. He merely asked for his cane, and not even that until Maggie had produced it," said Mrs. Musser.

"Well, that is true, and taking it for granted that he is the young man whom we met, is it not singular that we should have met him when on our way to the city in search of him?"

"It is one of the most singular affairs that I ever heard of," answered Mrs. Musser.

"How did the young man enjoy the company?" said Mrs. Musser to Charles, who entered the room and interrupted the conversation between herself and her husband.

"Very well," answered Charles, "but the most disgusting part of it is that those people made more fuss about that little incident than all the world besides."

"Do you call that a little incident?" cried Mrs. Musser, "seeing how near we lost our lives; and, besides, you being in greater danger than any of us?"

Charles made no response, and Mrs. Musser resumed: "I considered well over the story you related to us. I believe that you are the young man who met us in the train and gave the cane to my husband. I thought I noticed a resemblance in you to the young man as soon as you mentioned the cane. Is it not singular that we should meet you when on our way to the city in search of you?"

"In search of me?" cried Charles.

"Yes, in search of you. My husband wished to return the cane to you, if possible; and he thought he might get a trace of you in the police headquarters."

Charles turned crimson. He was equally as much surprised as the Colonel and his wife had been. It was a mystery to him why the Colonel and his wife should be so much interested in him.

Colonel Musser seeing how confused Charles was, said: "We spoke very frequently of you and the cane. In fact, I could not understand why so young a man should carry this old cane. I always considered it odd in you, but feel assured that the cane was always well taken care of. Several days ago the servants took it from its hiding place and wanted to burn it. I objected to their burning it, and it was again placed away where it had stood for so long a time."

"Burn my cane!" cried Charles, equally as much excited as the Colonel had been. "I would not part with it for any money."

"Not part with it for any money!" exclaimed the Colonel. "It must be a very valuable old cane."

"I prize it very highly. It is an heirloom."

"An heirloom!" cried Colonel Musser, rising from the sofa where he was sitting. "Well, if it is an heirloom and so valuable to you, then you must relate its history to us. I know it will be very interesting."

The Colonel had a family tradition about an old cane. His curiosity was now aroused, and he desired to get all the information about this cane that he could.

There was something very singular about it; besides, how similar was Charles' name to his.

"That will take very long, and I must leave. I—"

"Be seated and relate its history to me. It matters not how long it will take. I suppose it is very interesting. Give me the facts anyhow."

Charles watched the Colonel with the most anxious scrutiny while he was speaking. For some moments he seemed lost in thought. He then related to him the story. How his grandfather and a brother had parted in Sochora Valley; how the brother had given the cane to Charles' grandfather as a keepsake, and how it had been handed down from father to son until it came into the possession of Charles.

"Your story sounds very well, but it may be only a myth," said Colonel Musser.

"That is the history as related to me by my grandfather when I was quite young," remarked Charles.

"How do you account for these letters on the handle?" he inquired.

"Those letters are the initials of the name of my grandfather's brother—"

"You don't say!" cried Colonel Musser, forgetting himself in his excitement and interrupting Charles. "They are the initials of my father, myself and my son."

"And they are the initials of the names of my father and myself," continued Charles.

Maggie was standing near her mistress when Charles related the story. She noticed the impression it made

on the Colonel and his wife, and it frightened her almost out of her wits. She rushed to the kitchen and called to Dinah at the top of her voice that the Colonel and the young gen'man had a stroke of "perplexity."

Mrs. Musser's husband had frequently related the story about the cane to her since the death of their only child. They were continually hoping and wishing that someone would come and prove his or her relationship and remain with them as a son or daughter, and in future receive the immense wealth they had accumulated.

She could not discredit Charles' story about the cane and the initials on it, and she believed him to be the relative for whom they were continually wishing and waiting.

Colonel Musser felt like groping his way cautiously. He did not reveal to Charles the close relationship that he now thought existed between themselves. He frequently asked similar and confusing questions, which Charles answered in a straightforward manner, even correcting the Colonel when he erred.

There was an intense look in the Colonel's face as he sat in his chair and emitted volumes of smoke from his cigar.

"You are from Pennsylvania," he said, suddenly turning to Charles.

Charles nodded assent.

"Are your parents still living?"

"My parents are both dead."

This answer created a choking sensation in Charles' throat, which Colonel Musser did not fail to notice.

"Have you brothers and sisters?"

"None," replied Charles, gazing on the floor.

"You were away from home a long time?" queried Colonel Musser.

"Ever since I met you. I always contemplated returning to my home, but I was always unfortunate and could not do so, and here I am, floundering around in the country, and God only knows when I shall get home again."

"You said you had no relatives living, and I see no reason why you should be so anxious to return to your home."

Charles made no reply.

Mrs. Musser noticed Charles' embarrassment and came to his aid.

"I suppose he feels just like other people. They all like the homes of their childhood best and always have a longing for it," she said.

"Yes," retorted the Colonel. "Sometimes they make ties in their younger days, which keep them from leaving home."

Mrs. Musser made no reply, and Charles again made a close survey of the floor.

Suddenly the Colonel beckoned to his wife, and they together left the room. He went to his huge safe and removed therefrom a bundle of old, stained papers and scrutinized them well.

"These are the papers I want," he said to himself as he glanced at them. Then, turning to his wife, he

said: "Do you really think that he is the young man we met in the train?"

"I certainly do," she replied.

"I really believe it myself, but let us not be too hasty in making up our minds."

"That is the best way to do, I think."

"I suppose you can read German writing?" said Colonel Musser to Charles on his return to the drawing room.

"I can read and write German," answered Charles with astonishment.

"That comes in just nice," said the Colonel as he opened the parcel. "I have some papers here which I wish you to read for me." Then, looking at one of the papers, he continued: "Here is a letter that I am unable to read. It is in my possession a long time."

Charles scrutinized the writing a few minutes and then turned deathly pale.

"What is the trouble, young man?" said Colonel Musser. "Can you not read it? You told me that you could read German writing."

"Yes, I can read it, but this letter is a mystery to me."

"A mystery to you! I do not understand what you mean."

"This letter was written by my grandfather to his brother in this state a long time ago."

"Impossible!"

"I am certain of it. It bears the name of my grandfather and makes reference to my father. Here it is," said Charles, pointing to it.

"Read the contents to me!" cried Colonel Musser.

Charles read the letter and informed the Colonel of its contents. He did not know or think of the relationship that existed between them. He thought the Colonel some lawyer or land agent, and that the letter had come into his possession through some client.

"How did these papers get into your possession?" asked Charles.

"What makes you ask that question?"

"Because I—"

"I will be honest with you. These letters were written to my father by a brother who had emigrated to Pennsylvania. My father died when I was young, and all traces of the writer were lost. The story you related to me about the cane is true, and I do believe the one now in my possession and which you gave to me to be the identical cane. I am pleased to return it to you."

"Then your name is Moser, also?"

"Yes, my name is Moser, but in translating it from the German into English an error was made, and it was translated Musser. My father always contended that it was wrong, but custom compelled us to write it Musser."

"The story about the cane and the initials on the handle was a common one in our family. My father frequently related it to me. I felt convinced as soon as you related it that you knew something about it."

Colonel Musser extended his hand to Charles. "I welcome you as my cousin's son," he said.

"I am included in this little party," cried Mrs. Musser as she embraced Charles. "You are sent to us to fill the place of our son."

Colonel Musser sat in his chair and stared wildly around. His whole life was before him. He had not known of any relative near or far; and now this young man, who might prove a son to him in his old age, had come unexpectedly into his home.

Charles sat and pondered. He had told the Colonel and his wife a falsehood. Should he now tell them the truth?

Mrs. Musser placed her hand on her husband's arm. "Papa, why don't you speak?" she said.

Maggie, who was in continual attendance to her master and mistress, had listened to the reading of the letters. Suddenly she left the room and sought Billy and Dinah.

"Golly, gosh!" she cried as she entered the kitchen. "Ise jist tell yous somethin'. De Culumn an' dat are gentleman am sittin' in dat are room an' havin' a big pack of letters before 'em. An' I jist tell yous, dat are gentleman reads 'em right off Latum an' everythin,' an' de Culumn jist sits dare an' listens to him lake a young schoolboy. Golly! I believe he's a runaway lawyer an' a right smart one at dat. Now de doc won't git it off on us again by copying a few Latum words an' write 'em on dat are proscription. Dis are young man, he can read 'em off lake noffin, an' we kin git our own medicines an' do not need de doc any more."

CHAPTER XXIV

DOCTOR GREY considered himself the executor and one of the heirs of Colonel Musser, and the unexpected coming of Charles into the Colonel's family caused him no little uneasiness.

"That is the way of the Colonel and his wife," he said to a bystander. "Anyone that comes around and has a smooth, oily tongue, can get into their graces. No doubt they will make the same fuss over this fellow that they are making over Miss Means. They think she is a perfect angel and that there is no one like her."

The gentleman glanced rather suspiciously at the doctor. He could not understand what reason he had to make such comments about Miss Means.

"She is considered a very respectable young lady, I am informed," said the gentleman. "Do you not have the same opinion of her?"

"She is of a very common family, that is all. But that is not the question," said the doctor, changing the subject. "I do not see enough in their little accident to create such a sensation as to make the Colonel and his wife grow wild over anyone. Any common man could have saved them equally as well."

"Then you consider him more than a common man?" quizzed the gentleman.

"I don't know about that," said the doctor impatiently. "For all I know he may be a common tramp."

"He does not look much like a tramp," retorted the man with a wink to the other bystanders.

"I know nothing about him, but I suppose the outcome of it will be that Colonel Musser will shortly make his will in his favor; and if not that, he may wake up some morning and find the stranger gone and his purse also. But that is no concern of mine." With these remarks he suddenly turned on his heels and walked up the street.

"De doc am in waitin'," said Maggie, interrupting the conversation between Colonel Musser and his wife and Charles.

Colonel Musser looked blank, and Charles did not fail to notice it. "Show him into the room," said he.

It was an early hour for visitors and Charles could not help wondering what the doctor wanted.

"How is Colonel Musser this morning?" said the doctor on entering the room and extending his hand to him. "I thought I would call and see how you were. I hope there are no objections to my doing so."

"Not in the least! Not in the least! No objections whatever," answered Colonel Musser.

"I see you are getting along well after your accident."

"Yes, I expect to be able to walk without a cane before long. You see, my wife and Maggie were very attentive on me with liniments and bandages, and I am well on the way of recovery. In fact, I am nearly over it now," answered Colonel Musser.

"But ladies are not generally considered good doctors," retorted Dr. Grey.

"They were very satisfactory doctors in this case," said Colonel Musser, smiling pleasantly. Then, bethinking himself, he continued: "I beg pardon. I forgot to introduce you two gentlemen. You see—"

"Oh, no difference," said the doctor as he shook hands with Charles and cast a suspicious look at him. "Better late than never."

"By the way, doctor, this is the young man that saved us when my wife and I so nearly went over the precipice."

"Your wife was hurt also, I understand, Colonel?"

"Well, yes, but she fared better than I did. She escaped with a few scratches in her face and was badly scared," laughed Colonel Musser.

The doctor was a self-important man. He tossed his hat on the table and deposited himself in one of the large arm-chairs standing near by.

He was now ready to open fire on Charles.

"You are from Pennsylvania?" he said with no little sarcasm in his language.

Charles nodded assent.

"You came to this state several years ago?"

Charles nodded pleasantly as he said: "Yes, several years ago."

"I heard the Colonel make frequent mention of you."

"Yes," said Colonel Musser, "Charlie and I had quite an encounter with the rowdies in New York City when he arrived there with my wife and myself."

"There!" thought the doctor to himself, "it is Charlie already. In a few weeks it will be my son Charlie."

Trying to hide his mortification, he resumed: "They picked you up on the railroad? I—"

Charles' face colored. "They did not pick me up," he answered. "We met—"

"Do you expect to return to Pennsylvania *again?*" he interrupted.

"Yes, I expect to leave here before long."

"Oh, no, you don't," chimed in Colonel Musser. "You will remain with us."

"You don't know when you are going to leave?" said the doctor.

"No, sir, I don't."

"What reason, if not too impertinent, did you have for coming to this state?"

Colonel Musser glanced nervously at Charles, then at the doctor. Charles did not fail to notice it.

Mrs. Musser sat in her chair and rocked to and fro. She pretended to be reading, but in truth she was absorbed in the conversation between Charles and the doctor.

Charles bit his lip, as was his habit, but made no answer.

"Business is on a boom in Pennsylvania, I am informed," resumed the doctor after a short pause.

"Yes, there was considerable business going on in the coal region when I left home."

"Then, why did you leave home and come to this part of the country?" said the doctor as he passed his fingers through his hair and shifted in his chair.

"I think you are getting very inquisitive," said Charles. "I have—"

"I think so myself," cried Colonel Musser excitedly as he arose from his chair and began pacing the floor. "Charlie is young and has a right to go out into the world to make his fortune, and he can go wherever he pleases."

The doctor was shocked. He had not expected such an answer from Charles; besides, he noticed that he had insulted Colonel Musser.

"I did not mean to be impertinent," said the doctor in an apologizing way. "It is my way of speaking, and I—"

"I did not mean to be impertinent myself," answered Charles. "It is my way of answering such questions. I met many people in this state during my sojourn here. I always considered them nice and polite, with the exception of a very few, and I am very sorry to say that I must classify you with the few."

Mrs. Musser laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks, while Colonel Musser stared at the doc.

The doctor was very much annoyed by Charles' answer, and Mrs. Musser's laugh and thinking that nothing was to be gained by continuing his conversation, picked up his hat; and wishing the Colonel a speedy recovery, left the house, swearing vengeance on Charles under his breath.

Charles felt free when the doctor left the room, but more annoyances were in store for him. For no sooner had the doctor left, then Colonel Musser announced his intentions of driving to Albany to transact some important business.

"You must not think of going to Albany to-day," said his wife. "Miss Means and several young ladies will call this afternoon, and you should remain here by all means to help me entertain them."

"Charlie will remain here and help you entertain them. I can do my business in a short time and will be to home at an early hour."

"You cannot think of going alone. Some one must accompany you and do the driving."

"Billy will go with me."

"No, Billy shall not go with you. He is not a good driver, and—"

"Well, mamma, you are right. I have quite enough of Billy's driving. I do not wish him to accompany me; but as you insist upon some one accompanying me, I will take Charlie along. He understands how to handle hosses. The two generals will take us down and back in a jiffy, and we can be here early this afternoon. You will explain the cause of our absence to them."

Charles did not wish to go and protested violently, but Colonel Musser was obstinate and would not take "no" for an answer.

"You will be to home at an early hour, Charlie, and can have all the pleasure you want," he said.

"I wish I could persuade the Colonel to allow me to stay here. I do not wish to go to that old place," said Charles to himself on entering the carriage. "It is impossible. I cannot think of meeting Mr. Money."

"Culumn, yous better be keerful wid dem hosses. I 'magine deres goin' to be somethin' dreaful to happen to-day. De hosses am wild an' ready to fly away any minute. Dey act jist lake dey did when I took you an' de missus to Albany," said Billy.

"Oh, I guess they are not as bad as they were that day. They feel good and want some exercise, and they shall have plenty of it."

"'Deed, Culumn, deys very bad. Dey kick an' carry on so bad I never saw de lake. Somethin's goin' to happen, that's sure pop."

"Well, Billy, all we can do is to keep them in the road and let them run. You see we do not intend to drive so near that precipice to-day as Billy did when he took us to Albany," chuckled Colonel Musser.

"Yes, but Culumn," said Billy as he scratched his woolly head and rolled his eyes in their sockets, "dat's all right, but you see I could not hol' dem."

"We can hold them. Do not fear, Billy."

"But, Culumn, 'deed dere's danger. Last night I dreamed that I saw de Culumn an' de young mars take de two hosses an' drive away. An' one of de axles broke, an' you an' de young mars fell out of de carriage an' ware hurt. You see, Culumn, my dreams always come true."

"Well, Billy, we must go. You must be a good boy and not dream any more. Only bad boys lie in bed and dream, when they should be sleeping," said Colonel Musser, pulling Billy's hat playfully over his eyes.

Billy was about to answer, but the two horses sped away, and the carriage and occupants were soon lost to view.

"'Dem ol' Culumn's jist as bad as he eber was," said Billy. Hit's no use talkin' to him. Some day he will come home wid his neck broken, dat's sure pop."

"I dare say, Charlie," said Colonel Musser abruptly as they were driving swiftly along, "you was considerably annoyed by Doctor Grey's talk this morning."

"Yes, I was; and, besides, I was very sorry for my indiscreet answer in your presence."

"Oh, you must not mind the doctor. That is the only way to handle him. He is overestimating himself and getting a little bold of late. He is not my overseer as yet. I can run my business without his lordship, and before many days have expired I will tell him so."

The two horses sped nobly on and Charles found himself in a short time in Albany, the place he dreaded so much.

CHAPTER XXV

A NUMBER of the stockholders of the Albany Bank had arrived prior to Colonel Musser. The aged cashier was very busy and did not recognize him when he entered.

"Quite a stranger, Colonel," said the cashier as he beheld him. "I did not see you for some time."

"I could not come to town for a considerable time," replied Colonel Musser. "I had quite an accident and could not come down, but I have partially—well, fully—recovered and am able to be about again and attend to my business."

"We missed you very much, Colonel. By the way, did you come alone?"

"No, my wife insisted that I should not come alone, so I brought my relative along."

"A relative!"

"Yes, the young man that—"

"Did you not tell me that you had no relatives, or at least that you did not know of any?"

"So I did, but fortunately one turned up several weeks ago, a fine young fellow, indeed."

The cashier looked at him in a questioning manner.

"It is really true," said Colonel Musser.

"That is strange. May it not be a man that is after your money? You see—"

"No, I think not. He seems to be a very straightforward young man."

"What makes you think that he may be a relative? Has he any proofs to the fact?"

Colonel Musser related the story about the accident and Charles' making claim to the cane.

"You repeated the story about the cane quite frequently, Colonel, to various parties. Did you not?"

"Yes, I—well—I—"

"Do you not think the young man may have been informed about it?"

Colonel Musser was at a loss to answer, and, after some hesitation, again referred to the accident.

"That is all right, Colonel," said the cashier. "He could not foretell the accident, but—it—was a mighty clever introduction to his story."

"You don't mean to consider it a put-up job on me? Do you?"

"I certainly do not mean to say so as far as the accident goes; but, you see, men of money are frequently taken advantage of by fellows who are continually on the alert for them."

"Then you mean to say that—"

"No, no, Colonel! I do not mean to say that this is a fact. I merely cautioned you."

Colonel Musser showed plainly that he was annoyed by the cashier's remarks when he left the bank. "You will take me to the wharf," said he quite snappishly to Charles. "I must see Mr. Money in his office."

"There," said Charles to himself, "he has the story about the pen already."

On arriving at the wharf Colonel Musser insisted that Charles should go with him into the office, but the more he insisted the firmer Charles was in his determination to remain outside.

"You must remain over night with us, Colonel. The entire family will be disappointed if you do not remain with us," Charles overheard Mr. Money say to Colonel Musser as they came out of the office, walking arm in arm towards the carriage.

A chill ran over Charles' body. He became very nervous on hearing the familiar voice of Mr. Money. He thought of the disgrace he had met with in that very office, and he could not banish the rude words Mr. Money had spoken to him from his mind.

"I cannot remain with you. My wife expects company, and she insists on my coming home at an early hour. Besides, this young man—"

"Well, well, Charlie Moser! where do you come from?" cried Mr. Money to the surprise of Colonel Musser as he walked hurriedly towards the carriage and familiarly extended his hand to him. "Come into the office. I want to talk with you."

But Charles did not move. Colonel Musser gazed at the two in astonishment. He could not understand what it meant.

"Mr. Money, I think you are mistaken. I don't think you ever met Charlie. He came to my house lately. He never was—"

"Oh, yes, I do know him. He was assistant bookkeeper in my office for some time and—"

"And was discharged for stealing when I was innocent," said Charles before Mr. Money had finished speaking.

Colonel Musser started. It flashed on his mind that Charles was a criminal and impostor, and had refused to enter the office for fear of being arrested. He again thought of the cashier's warning. He blamed himself for being so hasty in cultivating the friendship of the young man.

Mr. Money looked sorrowfully on Charles. He now thought of the disgrace he had helped to heap on him. He could not refrain from speaking again.

"You come into the office and we will wipe away that stain, besides—"

"I have no stain to wipe away," said Charles, interrupting. "I—"

"Yes, there is, and I am going to be a gentleman with you."

"Should you not have been a gentleman with me before?"

Colonel Musser stood near the two men, ready to enter his carriage. He noticed that they were acquainted with each other, and feared that an old grudge existed between them.

"Colonel," said Mr. Money, "this young man was assistant book-keeper in my office. I trusted him to any and everything, but—"

Colonel Musser turned and gazed at Charles; then, turning suddenly, said to Mr. Money: "Did he steal anything from you?"

"No, you see—"

"Then I do not see how you are going to fasten a crime on him. I think—"

"No, no, Colonel. I am not going to fasten a crime on him. I am going to clear him of a crime."

'Oh, well, that is quite a different thing, Mr. Money. That is quite a different thing."

"You see, Colonel, we had a rascal in our midst, and finally Charlie was discharged for stealing. I want to take him into the office and declare him innocent of the crime before the clerks."

"Charlie certainly will not object to that," chuckled Colonel Musser. "He will go with you. I know he will, and—but one moment, in what way are you going to prove him innocent?" said Colonel Musser.

The detective's story was related, and at the conclusion the Colonel turned to Charles and said: "Charlie, it is your duty to forgive a wrong."

Charles immediately relented, and the three walked together into the office.

Mr. Money made quite a display before his clerks as he exonerated Charles from the crime, and finished by offering a position to him.

"I guess not," said Colonel Musser. "Not as fast as that. He is not seeking a position. He will remain with me. I will send him to school, and then he can attend to my business. I am getting old; and now that he is my near relative, I will hand all my business over to him. He is welcome to remain with me."

"But what reasons have you, Colonel, for sending him to school?"

"To get an education, of course."

"You need not go to that trouble. I assure you that he can take care of himself and your business."

"So much the better. Then I will unload some of my business on his shoulders immediately."

Charles looked inquiringly at Colonel Musser. He could not understand how he could afford to pay him the same wages that he could get in Mr. Money's office.

"I understand you. You need not fear. You will be well paid for your work. I am not going to make a drudge out of you," he said.

Mr. Money made no further solicitations, and the Colonel and Charles turned to leave the office; but at that moment a heavy hand was laid on Charles' shoulder.

"Charlie Moser, how are you?" said the familiar voice of Captain Murry.

Charles could not speak, and tears came into his eyes.

"Well, Charlie," said Colonel Musser, "I believe that you know everybody from here to New York City."

"I do not know everybody from here to New York City," said Charles, "but I do know some people in New York City and this place," he replied.

Captain Murry and Charles had a long conversation. At last the Colonel became urgent to leave on account of the lateness of the hour.

"Captain Murry," said Charles as he and Colonel Musser entered the carriage, "you were thus far the only trustworthy friend I have had in this world. I cannot thank you enough for removing this stain from me. I cannot describe the terrible agony I suffered; and, besides, when I was innocent."

"Better suffer when you are innocent than when you are guilty," remarked Colonel Musser.

"I never hit a man when he is down. That is the time when he needs his friends most. I want fair play for everyone," said the jovial Captain as he again gave Charles' hand a hearty shake.

Captain Murry noticed that Charles regretted to leave. It was too much for him. "Give the lad a fair chance, Colonel," he said with a significant wink. "He is a fair lad. I love him as me own. Do not forgit him."

"You need not fear, Captain. I assure you that he will be used well. He is my son now."

"That is right, Colonel! That is right! Ye see, Mr. Money is a little 'ot-'eated sometimes, but I timed him in this affair. I put a detictive on his tracks."

"You did exactly right, Captain," said Mr. Money. "You took a great weight from my shoulders and I bear you no grudge."

"Good-bye, Charlie," cried Captain Murry as he waved his hand. "I hope to see you again."

"Good-bye, Charlie," cried Mr. Money. "Remember me when you come across that gold pen in your pocket. Make good use of it."

Mr. Money had slipped a gold pen into Charles' pocket unawares to him.

"Colonel," said Charles, pleadingly, have you any objections to driving a short distance out of the way? I left some small articles at my former boarding-place and would like to get them."

"Certainly not! Certainly not! No objections in the least," answered Colonel Musser. "You have charge of the team."

This gave rise to another question in the Colonel's mind, which he was unable to grapple with. He now feared that Charles had failed to pay his boarding bill when he had left the place.

They had only a short distance to go. Mrs. Durkee sat on the piazza with a pale and anxious face. Her children were playing by her side. She saw the carriage approach, but paid no attention to it.

"Tommy dear! Do not be so noisy. The police will ketch you," she said to her little son who was now all in glee on seeing Charles. "Oh, child—" she cried again, but had no time to finish her speech.

"It is Tcharlie! It is Tcharlie!" cried the little urchin as he clambered down the steps to the pavement as fast as his weak little limbs would enable him to go.

It was a cordial greeting between them all. Charles gave a short explanation of his leaving, but failed to mention the trouble about the pen.

"I will see you at some future time," he said to Mrs. Durkee as he gently patted the little children playfully.

The Colonel was deceived by the latter part of Charles' remarks.

"Can you not pay your board bill now?" he said to Charles as he fumbled in his coat pocket for his wallet. "The poor woman may need it."

"What board bill?" said Charles.

"Oh, land, no!" cried Mrs. Durkee, overhearing the remark. "Charlie owes me no boardin'. He left like a gintleman."

"That's good! That's another good recommendation, Charlie." Changing his tone he whispered: "Hand this to those poor, fatherless children."

Colonel Musser turned suddenly and entered the carriage.

"Now, Charlie," said he, "let your two hosses show their speed. Get me home as soon as possible or mamma will be offended."

CHAPTER XXVI

CHARLES ATTENDS A SPELLING-BEE

WHEN Colonel Musser and Charles arrived at the Musser mansion, Billy stood ready with a smiling face to welcome them home.

"Well, Culumn got home at last. I was feared yous were hurt again," said he.

"Oh, no, Billy! I had a good driver this time, and we were not so foolish as to let the hosses run away. You see—"

"Several ladies in de house waitin' for yous," said Billy, interrupting to change the subject.

"Dear me," said Colonel Musser, smiling, "ladies waiting to see me. I—"

"Yes, sah, an' I spose for Mistah Charlie."

"Turn the horses over to Billy," said Colonel Musser to Charles, "and we will go to the house immediately. Mrs. Musser will be offended if—"

"Would I not better go with Billy and see that the horses are put away properly?" said Charles, trying to evade the company.

"Billy will attend to the hosses. He is a good hand at that," said Colonel Musser, chuckling to himself. "They wont run away for him. We will go to the house and see who is there."

Billy scratched his woolly head nervously and rolled his eyes in their sockets, but made no answer.

As they drew near the house they heard music and singing, and it unnerved Charles.

"Colonel," he said, pleadingly, "I would—"

"Now, now, Charlie!" said Colonel Musser, surmising that Charles was trying to evade the company, "you must not play the part of a coward. No cowards wanted here. You must brace up and show a bold front. I am sure you can take well care of yourself."

The Colonel had barely finished speaking, when Maggie appeared at the door with an eager face.

"Golly gosh, Culumn!" said she as she seized a whisp and began dusting Charles' coat, "hurry into de room, for de missus am waitin' for yous an' Mars Charlie since *heben* knows when."

"Well, Maggie," said Colonel Musser as he ushered Charles into the room, "we will go into the room to please you and Mrs. Musser."

"Yes, Culumn, better go right along wid yourself," said Maggie with a knowing wink. "De young ladies am waitin' to see Mars Charlie."

The remainder of the evening was joyously spent, and Charles acquitted himself well to the astonishment of Colonel Musser and his wife. The Colonel, however, could not refrain from calling his wife aside and relate to her the story of Mr. Money and the detective.

"Good! That is just the thing! We must hurry and be going by all means. It will give Charlie an opportunity to meet many of the young people in this

community. He will have lots of fun listening to them as they contend for the championship in spelling; besides, you know the teacher is a very good friend of ours," said Colonel Musser in answer to his wife's earnest solicitations that he and Charles would accompany her and the young ladies to the spelling-bee that evening in the village school a short distance away from Colonel Musser's home.

Charles begged to be excused from going, but the more he strove to be excused from going, the more determined the Colonel and his wife were that he should accompany them. They would not take "no" for an answer.

"You dare not think of remaining at home, Charlie," said Mrs. Musser. "It will be an insult to the teacher. She is one of our particular friends. She calls on us frequently of late, you know."

It was amusing to Charles to see the opposing parties vie with each other. It put him in mind of his younger days, when he with others strove so zealously for the championship in their schools.

The teacher gave the younger pupils a fair chance to display their ability by giving them easy words to spell, so as not to discourage them; but as time drew on, she selected more difficult words, and they "went down," using the expression of the day, one after another. The contest soon came to an end, and other captains were selected for another contest.

The teacher opened the spelling-book and the captains guessed the page. The one guessing the number

of the page or the nearest number to it had the first choice.

Doctor Grey was chosen by the lucky one, and he promptly took his place amid the applause of his friends, while the other captain made some other selection.

Charles glanced at the doctor. He noticed how proud he felt of the applause rendered him. He really envied him. How he longed for an invitation to spell.

Soon the best spellers were selected and had taken their respective places in the opposing lines. Then the teacher suggested that there were strangers in their midst who would probably like to spell.

"I choose the stranger," said the captain who had the first choice. A buzz of surprise ran through the audience. She had made the choice more out of politeness to Charles than anything else.

Charles promptly accepted and moved to his place in the ranks. He glanced at the opposing side and was met with a glance of defiance from his enemy, the doctor.

Colonel Musser glanced anxiously at his wife. "I wonder what he wants there?" he said.

"I suppose he wants to spell," answered his wife.

"I wish I could draw his attention. I would like to tell him not to—"

"You must not interfere with him. Let him try his luck. He has as much right to spell as anyone else."

"But he will be 'spelled down,' and then the crowd will—"

"Oh, that does not matter. Others will be 'spelled down' also," said Mrs. Musser, interrupting.

Charles overheard some of the remarks made by the bystanders, and it unnerved him. His heart began to beat violently in his breast, and the floor seemed to rock under his feet. He saw the anxious look on the Colonel's face and regretted that he had acted so imprudently. But he again thought of his conquests in former years and took new courage.

Others were now chosen, and the opposing parties were ready for the contest.

Colonel Musser again desired to draw the attention of Charles, but was persuaded by his wife not to interfere with him.

"Well, then, let him try his luck," said he petulantly.

"That is the best we can do. We have no right to interfere with him."

"But you will see what it will amount to. Oh, my! I feel awkward about this matter."

A number of the contestants were spelled down on each side and the others promptly moved closer to the captains. The teacher selected still more difficult words. Others were spelled down, and the remaining persons standing again moved closer to the captains.

"That young fellow is smart—right smart, indeed. He is a good match for them all," said an elderly gentleman to a person standing near him.

"He will not last much longer; mind what I say," said the person spoken to.

The teacher selected more difficult words, and some of the spellers were compelled to yield their places to others. Charles and the doctor now stood nearly opposite each other.

The doctor had the reputation of being one of the best spellers in the vicinity, and he frequently boasted of having many scalps as trophies. He had made orthography a special study for several years, and it was conceded by his enemies and friends that what he did not know about spelling was not worth knowing. He eyed Charles contemptuously, and from the first felt certain of carrying off his scalp as a trophy before the evening was over. But he became aware that he had a worthy foe to contend with as they continued spelling, and became more cautious. He had advantage over Charles, however, in the peculiarity of the pronunciation.

Charles noticed his disadvantage and was on the alert. He listened carefully to the words as pronounced, and spelled them slowly and deliberately.

One of the spellers now misspelled the word believe by changing the "ie," and had to sit down. The doctor moved to her place. Soon another contestant spelled receive by changing the "ei," and had to sit down, and Charles moved to her place opposite the doctor.

The audience was now in an uproar.

"There, it's goin' to be a fight between the 'doc' and the young gentleman," cried several in unison.

"The 'doc' has his match this time," said a gentleman to one of his friends.

"The young man is no match for him. He spells too slowly. See how the 'doc' rattles it off," said another.

Many and similar words were spoken throughout the entire contest, and Charles did not fail to hear them.

The teacher selected still more difficult words and soon others were spelled down, and Charles stood alone on the side to which he was chosen. He was now at a greater disadvantage than before. He braced himself up to greater exertions.

Friends began to whisper excitedly to each other, asking who the young man was and where he was from.

The Colonel in his excitement nearly slid down from his high chair, while Mrs. Musser's lower jaw dropped in amazement.

The doctor and Charles were now matched against each other. The doctor was not so hopeful as he had been before, but inwardly threatened to make good his resolve. Charles was equally as determined that he should not fulfill his threat.

It was getting late and the contest was still going on. The opponents were well matched. The teacher had exhausted the spelling-book for want of more difficult words and resorted to the dictionary. She

turned over leaf after leaf in her endeavor to find more difficult words. At last her eyes fell on a word that decided the fate of the doctor.

"Re-cherche," she said with downcast eyes.

"Re-re, s-h-a-r-shar, reshar, s-h-a-sha, re-cher-sha," spelled the doctor.

"That's the ticket," whispered one of the doctor's friends. A mighty sticky word it is, but the doc knows how to spell it."

Charles could not suppress a smile. He knew that the doctor's fate was sealed. It was the very word by which he had defeated Bob Fratinger some years before.

"Next," said the teacher half-reluctantly, for she feared that Charles could not spell the word and the contest would not be ended.

Charles spelled the word slowly, pronouncing each syllable distinctly as he spelled it.

"That is correct," said the teacher as she closed the dictionary, and the defiant doctor sat down in disgust.

The audience was in an uproar, some siding with the doctor and some with Charles, and it took several minutes before order was restored.

"Gee wiz!" cried one of the spectators as he tossed his hat to the ceiling. "This beats anything I ever saw. Look at Colonel Musser. He enjoys the fun. It is too good to laugh about."

"He is awfully smart, that young man is," retorted a friend of the speaker. "He licked him all to pieces, he did."

"Very smart. Smart as a whip. I knew he—"

The remainder of the sentence was drowned by the noise and confusion of the crowd. The people outside crowded to the door and windows eager to learn the cause of the excitement within the room.

The doctor's friends pretended to enjoy the fun, but they felt ill at ease. Their champion was defeated, and, in their estimation, disgraced.

Many of the audience crowded around Charles to congratulate him.

Colonel Musser could not control himself. In his excitement he sprang from his seat and grasped Charles' hand and shook it violently.

Charles withdrew as soon as possible. He did not enjoy the victory. Sad memories flitted through his brain. He thought of home and friends. He hastened to Colonel Musser's house, rushed to his room and threw himself on the bed. Someone tapped lightly on the door. He rose hastily, grasped one of his favorite books and pretended to read. "Come in," he said in answer to another rap.

"Hard at it, Charlie," said Colonel Musser on entering the room.

"Yes, I wish to read some interesting matter before retiring," he answered.

"Trying to get the excitement out of your mind, eh?"

"What excitement?" said Charles with a surprised look on his face.

"The 'spelling-bee,' of course."

"Oh, that is all over," laughed Charles. "It was over before I reached here."

"You had quite an encounter with the doctor. You undertook a great deal when you entered the contest. I surely thought you would be defeated."

"Yes, it was quite a risky business. The young people around this vicinity are very good spellers."

"But you had the doctor to contend with mainly."

"Yes, he is a very clever speller."

Colonel Musser gazed at Charles several moments, then he blurted out: "Charlie, would you not like to read law?"

"No, I would like to—"

"Go home," interrupted Colonel Musser as he slammed the door and walked out of the room in a huff.

CHAPTER XXVII

COLONEL MUSSER QUARRELS WITH CHARLES

CHARLES MOSER was now well established in the graces of Colonel Musser and his wife. He attended to his vast estates and during spare times worked faithfully on his books.

Colonel Musser, though advanced in years, was still hale and hearty, a bold horseman, a staunch hunter, and kept horses and hounds for the amusement of the chase. He found Charles as bold and daring as himself in the saddle, and as eager to follow the hounds as they roamed through the valleys and along the steep mountains.

The Colonel was pleased with the frank, cordial character of Charles. He took him in his favor and made him his constant companion during his hunting trips. Young people were invited to the Musser homestead, and all was done to make him feel at home that could possibly be done. But in spite of all the pleasures and all the caresses bestowed on him, he frequently became moody and would shun the company of all.

Colonel Musser and his wife did not fail to notice it, and asked the cause, but were as frequently met with a deaf ear.

"Charlie," said Mrs. Musser one day after imparting a kiss on his cheek, "try and come home at an

early hour this afternoon. I expect company and wish you to help me entertain them."

"Who is it, mamma?" said Charles in an absent-minded way.

"You know one of them, Charlie," replied Mrs. Musser playfully. "I need not tell you."

"I have no idea who it may be," answered Charles.

"Oh, yes, you do! You heard me tell papa the other day that Miss Means would call and remain with us several days."

Charles' countenance fell at the mention of the name and made no reply.

Miss Means was considered an heir by the Mussers to a goodly share of their vast estates. "But why should the estate be divided?" were their constant thoughts. She was young, beautiful and accomplished and a fitting companion for Charles. She would make a loving wife for him, and Colonel Musser and his wife would have a happy home with them during their declining years.

"I will speak to him when he returns," said Colonel Musser in answer to his wife's complaint. "I notice myself that he acts very disgracefully towards Miss Means of late. I regret that I did not speak to him about it before this time."

Colonel Musser and his wife were in the sitting room when Charles reached home. "Tell Charlie that I want to see him at once," said Colonel Musser to Maggie with an impatient wave of his hand.

The summons was nothing unusual to Charles. He placed his horse in charge of Billy and went to the room.

"Come to the fire, Charlie," said Mrs. Musser to him as he entered. "It is damp and chilly, and no doubt you want to warm yourself."

Charles dropped into a chair which was standing near the fireplace. "It is very chilly," he said, rubbing his hands, at the same time smiling pleasantly on the Colonel and his wife.

"It is unusually chilly for this time of the year," said Colonel Musser. Then, after a short pause, he added: "Did you find the tenants all well-to-do today?"

Charles made his report, as was his custom, and rose to leave the room.

"One moment, Charlie," said Colonel Musser, "I have something important to speak with you."

Charles seated himself again. "What is it, papa?" said he.

"I have an unpleasant, well, an important, matter to talk to you about. The fact is, I wanted to talk to you about it several times lately. You know I took you into my family as if you were my own son."

"I hope you have no reason to regret it," answered Charles with a flushed face.

"Well, no, not exactly; but that is not what I was going to say. You see, when I made my will I did not think that my property would ever be divided, but it seems to me lately that that will be the case."

Colonel Musser stopped speaking and looked at Charles in a sort of meditative way. He resumed: "My wife and I noticed that you are using Miss Means very rudely, and we thought it our duty to talk to you. It—"

"I am not aware of my using her rudely," interrupted Charles.

"Well, you may not think so, but it seems to us that you are slighting her in every possible way."

Colonel Musser ceased speaking and looked at Charles. Charles stared into the fire and made no answer.

"You see, Charlie," resumed Colonel Musser, "Mamma and I are getting old, and we are thinking of lightening our burdens; and we thought that you and Miss Means would get married, and ease us of some of them. She would make a kind and loving wife for you, and—"

"Oh, Colonel!" cried Charles excitedly as he rose and paced the floor. "I cannot think of marrying. I—"

"Why not, Charlie?" interrupted Colonel Musser.

"It is impossible. I cannot think of marrying."

"Do you mean to say that you do not have the means to marry? You know that that will be no hinderance to it."

"No, that is not it."

"Do you not think it would be better for us all if you would get married?"

"It might be so, but—"

"Then I see no reason for your delaying it. You could live happily together, and mamma and I would feel safe of having a good home and have someone to take care of us. You know, Charlie, everything would belong to you and your wife."

Charles was thunder-struck. He walked back and forth in the room. The very thing that he dreaded so long a time now came before him at an unexpected moment. "What shall I do?" was the question foremost in his mind. "Shall I give my reasons for not marrying? Yes," he thought. "I will tell all. I will bear the consequences better now than later on."

"I cannot marry. It is impossible. I am—"

"Then there must be some reason for it," said Mrs. Musser, interrupting.

"There is," answered Charles with his usual frankness.

"You have reasons for not marrying?"

"For not marrying Miss Means," answered Charles.

Colonel Musser and his wife were shocked. "What reasons can you have for not marrying her?" asked they at the same time.

Charles hesitated, but on second thought told them how he had quarreled with his mother and had left home, and how he longed to return to his mother and sister.

Colonel Musser became greatly excited, and before Charles had finished speaking, he stood before him with clenched fists.

"And you had the meanness to tell me that your mother and father were both dead, and you had no home. I was warned when you entered my house that you were an imposter, and so it turns out to my sorrow. You can go. You shall not remain in my house over night. I am only too glad to get rid of you."

"May I explain to you, papa? I—"

"Explain!" cried Colonel Musser. "No explanation is necessary. You condemned yourself. I will not hear any more. I regret that you ever crossed my threshold, and I am done with you."

Charles was stung to the quick. He cast a longing glance at Mrs. Musser. She tried to intercede for him, but the enraged husband gently pushed her aside and turned more fiercely on Charles.

Charles rushed out of the room into the spacious hallway and from there into the yard. "I should have known better," he said to himself as he sank into a chair under one of the trees and covered his face with his hands.

Maggie saw all that had transpired. She rushed into the kitchen and cried at the top of her voice: "Dinah! Dinah! de Culumn am crazy. He struck our young Mars an' de Missus, an' now de young Mars am goin' to leave."

Colonel Musser was still greatly excited. "That is the way I talk to such fellows," he said to his wife with a haughty look on his face.

"Yes, that was a great talk, indeed," said Mrs. Musser sarcastically. "I see no reason for your talk-

ing to him in that way. The trouble is, you are entirely too hasty."

"Was I too hasty again in this matter? Too hasty after he had told us all this falsehood and after being so kind to him?"

"Was he not kind to us?" said Mrs. Musser.

Colonel Musser made no answer to her question.

Mrs. Musser sank into a chair and began to weep. Charles had always been kind and obliging to her, and she could not bear to have him leave in this way. She rose and tapped the bell.

"Maggie, tell Charlie that I want to see him," she said.

"Missus, de young Mars, he run out ob de house hilter, skilter, and I do not know where I may find him."

"Maggie, you can find him. I know you can."

Maggie tripped out of the house into the yard.

"Mars Charlie," she cried," "de Missus am wantin' you. Come into de house right away. She will die."

This was too much for Charles. "Where is she?" he cried as he sprang to his feet to obey the summons.

"De Missus am in de room, where Mars Charlie left her."

"Charlie, I want you to tell me what reasons you have for not marrying Miss Means. She is a good girl and—"

"Mother, I cannot marry her. I respect her, but I—"

"Cannot marry her?" snarled Colonel Musser, who had seated himself by the side of his wife and interrupted the conversation.

"Now, papa, will you please be so kind and not interfere in this conversation," cried Mrs. Musser peevishly.

"I am not going to interfere. I merely—"

"Let Charlie give us his reasons for not marrying Miss—"

"He did give his reasons."

"He did not," cried Mrs. Musser pettishly.

"Well, then, let him speak," said Colonel Musser, "and I will be quiet."

Charles now related the story. How he had loved Mary Brown. How Jim DeStay and his pals had given him a beating, and how he had quarreled with his mother and left home.

This was too much for the excitable Colonel Musser. He could not control his feelings.

"Charlie, is that true?" he cried excitedly.

Mrs. Musser patted Charles gently on the shoulder. "Poor boy," she said, "you have reasons for refusing to marry Miss Means."

"Yes, you have, Charlie," cried Colonel Musser wild with excitement. "You must go home and thrash those fellows within an inch of their lives, and then marry that girl. Now mind what I say."

"You are, indeed, giving good, wholesome advice to Charlie."

"Mamma, that is just the way I talk."

"Do you want him to get arrested? and, besides, you don't know but that the young lady is married."

Charlie's heart gave a bound at the mention of "the young lady."

"Now, Charlie," said Mrs. Musser, "you will get ready to go home. We will take you to Albany in the morning, and you may be able to get a boat and go to New York City."

"Yes, I will take you to Albany in the morning," said Colonel Musser. "You can depend on that."

"Beg pardon, papa. Say: 'We will take you to Albany.'"

"But I—"

"Never mind, Charlie," said Mrs. Musser, "you will not go pennyless."

"No, indeed," cried Colonel Musser, "but remember—"

"That will do," said Mrs. Musser, interrupting. "Charlie will go home and act the part of a gentleman. If the young lady is married, he will come back to us again and remain with us."

"He will come back to us married or not married," cried Colonel Musser excitedly.

Several days thereafter the "Half Moon" carried one passenger besides the crew for New York City.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CHARLES MOSER RETURNS TO HIS NATIVE PLACE

AFTER years of battling with the world, Charles Moser, with his valise and the old cane in hand, again looked upon the station from whence he had taken so sudden and unexpected a departure.

Speaking several words hastily to a bystander, he crossed the quaint old bridge and walked rapidly along the dusty road, impatient to view again the place of his birth and the scenes of his childhood. Objects of interest greeted him along the entire distance. Large stone and brick houses and well-filled barns now stood where once existed large groves of oak and chestnut trees.

As the last rays of the golden sun were falling over the valley, he stood before the stone school-house—the place of his many innocent pranks. The yard was now enclosed by a new paling fence. The door and shutters had recently been painted and the roof showed traces of repair.

What memories of by-gone days passed before his mind's eye in panoramic succession. The familiar old school path lay before him; near by was the home of his Mary, if he still might call her such, while in the distance he descried the woods through which he had so frequently passed in going to and from his home.

His mind was halting between two emotions—should he follow the path to his old home, or should he turn aside and first go to the home of his Mary?

He knew his mother would forgive him and take him back to her bosom as a loving mother would welcome her long-lost son, but what would Mary, the idol of his heart, say? She could not and would not forgive him. Perchance she had married his rival, having thought of him as no longer living, or perchance she was dead. He still remembered how she had detested his rival. "She could not have married him," he thought.

"What should he say, were he to meet her face to face as the wife of another, or what excuse could he offer for his so suddenly and unexpectedly leaving her?

"What a joy it would be to clasp her hand and tell her that he never wavered in his love.

"Would she forgive him for deserting her if she was still unmarried? What a pleasure it would be to receive her forgiveness and assurances of her faith." These and many other emotions flitted through his mind.

As he was thus contemplating, the door opened and a kind-faced lady, accompanied by a little fair-haired girl, appeared in the doorway.

"It is uncle," cried the little girl, clapping her hands joyfully. "He wants to come into the house and talk with baby."

"No, no!" said the fond mother, as she took the little child in her arms. "It is not uncle. Baby must be quiet. The gentleman wants to talk with mamma."

Charles, somewhat abashed, stammered: "Is this the place where the old Beer school-house once stood? It seems to be the place, but—"

The lady interrupted him before he had finished speaking. "Yes, sir! It's the same old house, but it is our home now. My husband bought it when the new school building was erected in the village."

"I thought it was the old building, but I was not certain. Things changed wonderfully in the last few years."

' Many peopfe who attended the school here in their youth stop and gaze longingly at the house, and ponder on doings of by-gone days."

"I am certain that the desks, should they still remain, contain traces of my pen-knife and pencil. What then happy times! But the world has dealt hard with me since I last saw the dear old place," said Charles to himself.

"That is the house where Mrs. Beers lived and over there is the house where Peter Brown lived, pointing in the direction, but they are both dead and gone for some years."

"Where is Mary Brown?" sprang to Charles' lips; but ere he could speak, the lady resumed her talk.

"This is the path the children trod in going to and coming from school. We were a jolly company of happy, care-free children as we romped along the path through the woods. A long time ago an Indian was shot somewhere along this path, and some of the people think to this day that the path is haunted.

Regina, the witch, insists upon it that she saw the Indian's ghost in the woods on several occasions, but most of the people have no faith in her story and make fun of her."

The woman, unheeded by Charles, continued her rambling remarks upon scenes and incidents, how the pupils had teased "Old Henny's" dog when on their way to and from school, how "Old Henny" had frequently given them chase with a hoop-pole, and how they were chastised by the stern old teacher for their misbehavior in going to and coming from school.

Recovering from his reverie, Charles bade her a kind adieu and, patting the little child gently on the cheek, he again resumed his journey along the path and through the fields, stopping ever and anon at some object of interest.

When Charles had passed out of sight the lady remarked to herself: "Well, indeed! That gentleman looks very familiar to me, but, for the life of me, I cannot think who he is, and I really forgot to ask him his name. Perhaps he was one of my schoolmates."

Charles frequently turned and looked at the house where Mary lived the last time he saw her. He thought of going there, but how could he act so unwisely? It would be useless, if she was there, for she would not forgive him.

In the distance he saw the home where "Old Henny" had lived. He hastened his steps, for he imagined he saw the bent old cooper emerging from the door. He had no fear of him now. He believed that

the old cooper would extend to him a hearty welcome to his old home, but he was doomed to disappointment, for as he drew near he saw that the garden was overgrown with weeds; that the path to the spring was no longer used, and that the cattle had access to its bubbling waters. The open door, the broken windows, the sagging roof, proclaimed desertion of human inhabitants. He could scarcely realize the truth, and would fain have called "Halloo, Henny!" as of days gone by; but, knowing the futility of endeavoring to recall the departed, he sadly retraced his steps and followed the path to the woods. He scaled the fence at one bound. A chill passed over him. He again was at the place where he had had his encounter with Jim DeStay and his pals and was so sadly worsted.

That encounter was the cause of his leaving home and losing his Mary. His fist clenched involuntarily as he thought of it, and he was ready for an encounter with any object that should approach him, but no one molested him and he again resumed his walk.

Passing on a short distance, he thought he heard someone whistle near him. He paused for a moment. He heard it again, but thinking it was the moaning of the wind among the trees, he paid no further attention to it and proceeded on his journey.

Had he passed the same place several minutes before, he might have had another encounter with his old rival, who had passed by in another direction and was whistling for his friends to join him.

Charles walked on a short distance. He was at the forks of the path—the path to the left leading to his home, the other leading to the village. The broad, flat, low stone still lay in the forks of the path. Charles imagined he saw the stone glaring at him.

"Well, old fellow, are you still here?" said Charles, addressing the stone. "I had many an encounter with you, but I was always worsted. My little sister and I—" Charles ceased talking. He again glanced at the two paths. He could not decide which one he should take. "Shall I take the one leading to the village or the one leading to my home?" said he to himself.

Perchance his mother was dead. He would go to the village and make inquiries. Surely someone could tell him whether his mother was still living or not.

With these emotions surging in his feverish brain, he moved on toward the village.

As he hurried along, the joyous notes of the birds, the chattering of the squirrels, as they leaped from bough to bough, seemed to welcome him home again.

After what seemed like hours to him, he emerged from the woods, followed the road and entered the brick hotel which was erected on the site of the old log one.

He was familiarly greeted by the landlord. He passed his traveling case and cane—the cane he had clung to in his adventures—to the host, and arranged for such accommodations as the house afforded.

He recognized in the old landlord the features of the once gay young man for whom he had so fre-

quently worked in his younger days, but did not make himself known to him.

Several men sat in the barroom, holding a conversation with each other. He scrutinized their features keenly, but could not recognize them as any of his old friends.

At first they spoke in an undertone, but as the conversation led on they became more excited.

"We will let it to the stranger," said one of them; "he seems to be a man of good learning."

"I am willing to abide by his decision," said the second.

The third did not feel inclined to have Charles decide for them.

"He knows nothing about our affairs," said he in a surly way. "I do not feel like having every stranger that hobbles into the place speak into our affairs." So saying, he picked up his hat and left the room.

"He is too 'ot 'eaded," said one, "no one can convince him; not if—"

"Not if all the inhabitants of Mars and Jupiter would decide against him," interrupted his comrade.

"He knows everything best. No one knows anything but he."

Charles could not suppress a smile.

"He is always in a row with someone. The trouble is, he talks too much, and, besides, no one can convince him and if he is in the wrong."

It was evident that the two speakers were disgusted with their partner.

"What is the trouble?" said Charles, addressing the men.

"We were talking about slate—"

"About slate?" said Charles. Well, he is right. To my sorrow, I do not know anything about slate."

"To my sorrow," rejoined one of the men, "I do."

Supper was now announced and Charles, with several other men, passed to the dining-room.

The genial landlord conversed with the guests, as was the custom in village hotels in those days.

Charles' mind was uneasy. He despatched his meal, returned to the barroom and entered again into a conversation with the landord. During the conversation he warily led the landlord to the subject of the longevity and the habits and customs of the inhabitants of the community. Soon he learned that his mother was still living and that she resided in the old Moser home. To the astonishment of the landlord and the other men, he suddenly took his hat from the rack and walked out of the house, saying: "I will take a short walk. I will return soon."

Time wore on. Charles did not return, and the landlord became uneasy about him.

One of the men, who noticed the uneasiness of the landlord, remarked: "I guess, old man, you are beaten out of a meal this time. You will never see him again, I warrant you. I really had no faith in him when he entered the house."

Soon all the parties left. The proprietor again thought about the cane. He feared that a dagger

might be concealed in it. After thoroughly examining it, he placed the cane and valise in an adjoining room, where it would be difficult to be found by anyone unacquainted with the premises.

CHAPTER XXIX

MARY AT HOME BEWAILING HER FATE

HAD Charles Moser turned aside from the regular path and taken the one leading towards Mary's home instead of going to the village hotel, he would have found her sitting and weeping, and Bessie in her innocent, childish way trying to console her.

The next morning the High Sheriff of the county would come and sell the house which was so dear to them.

"Mary," said Bessie, as she folded her arms lovingly around her, "we will remain here. I know we will. Someone will buy our home and will allow us to remain here."

"Yes, my dear! Jim DeStay will surely buy it for a small sum of money, and we can remain here, provided we pay a large amount of yearly rent."

"No," said Bessie, "someone will buy it for us, and we will remain here. Grammy Moser will come here and help us do the work and we will get along well together. Oh, won't it be just delightful! Then Jim DeStay will have to remain away and not bother you for money all the time."

Mary could not imagine what her sister was talking. "Oh, Bessie, you talk so queer. Who would ever think of doing such a thing?"

"Well, you know everybody pities us, and—"

"Yes, that is true, but that does not buy the property for us."

When Mary's father died he exacted a promise from her that she would care for and protect her little sister as long as she could do so. She had thus far strictly kept her promise. She had even denied herself many a pleasant moment in performing her task. She saved all the money she could and paid the interest and even small amounts on the mortgage, to the great satisfaction and delight of Mrs. DeStay and the sorrow of Jim and his father, for they both knew that they never could expect to get the property honestly into their possession as long as Mary lived.

Some time after Mary's father had died, Tony DeStay and his wife died and the mortgage came in possession of Jim, Mary's deadly enemy.

Jim's visits again became more frequent and always wound up in a quarrel and a demand for more money, after in vain trying to induce her to marry him.

Jim was frequently in need of money. He and his pals lived at a high rate and spent money very freely. He tried to get all the money on the mortgage he could get, with the intention to sell the property afterwards.

Mary saw the tricks that Jim was up to, and at last she ceased to pay. This gave Jim an opportunity to play his part, and he immediately handed the mortgage to his attorney for collection.

Mary saw the trouble coming. She did not bewail the loss of the property so much for herself as for her little sister. She would frequently say: "Why did Charlie not remain at home? Had he done so, we

could have paid the mortgage and kept the property. His mother could have remained with us and all would have gone well."

The two sisters walked into the yard. They would take a last look at the dear old place. Everything they beheld looked dearer to them than ever before.

The whip-poor-will flew from bush to bush near them, calling out his plaintive song. It seemed as if the little creature wished to console them.

Bessie was light-hearted, while Mary was very sad and knew not what to do.

Bessie, in her glee, sprang forward to a tiny plant which she had planted with her own hands. She lovingly patted it and in her innocent way cried: "You are Bessie's plant. No one will take you away from me. You will remain here with me and I will take good care of you."

This was too much for her kind-hearted sister. She turned to go into the house, while tears streamed down her cheeks. As she turned she beheld the form of her detestable enemy before her.

His black, beady eyes seemed to pierce her very soul. The few seconds she gazed at him seemed like hours to her.

He had seen and heard all, and could not help showing his pleasure at Mary's bereavement.

"What does he want again?" said Mary in an undertone. "Does he want us to see that he glories in our misfortune?"

He could not help seeing that he was not a welcome visitor. He saw it but too plainly.

"You are mighty much afeared of my comin'," said he.

"No one said anything to you that I heard," said Mary.

"Oh, wal! A person can always see ef he's welcome ur not."

"Don't you consider yourself welcome?"

"No, I don't. I see that yer spiteful at me."

"Then why do you not remain away?"

"I have a right to come here."

"You have no right to come here."

"Yes, I have."

"You have a mortgage on this property, but you don't own it."

"Well, I will have a right to come here after to-morrow."

"That may be true. But you must buy the property first, and you know very well that other people have as much right to buy it as you have."

This was a blow to Jim. He could not comprehend her meaning. He knew of no one wishing to buy the property.

"Wal!" said Jim, slowly sinking in a chair, "I see yer jist as mad as ever. I don't know why. I always wus yer best friend, an' I came to make yer another offer."

Mary stared at him. "Another offer!" she said. "Do you want our clothing, also?"

"You know I am always as good as my word. I—"

But Mary interrupted him. "As good as your word! Then you are here again for money," she said excitedly.

"No, I'm not here fer money; I'm here fer you."

"For me?"

"I will give you a good home, and—"

"Well, I don't want any of your goodness. I—"

"You are always so cross. You must not blame me fer sellin' the property. I can not afford to lose any money on it."

"So you will lose money on it if you do not sell it? I thought you were making money all the time by my paying on the mortgage. Should you not have waited some time longer and have me pay more on it, and then sell? The property is worth more than the mortgage calls for. It is all a spite work."

"No, it is not. You see, you refused to pay and acted very spitefully all the time, and—"

"That simply shows that I knew what trick you were up to. You would have sold it any way, no matter how much I had paid on it.

"Then, I'll sell the property. But yer had better not be so hasty. You know yer will never git a home ef yer so cross."

"I never asked you for a home, did I?"

"No, you did not, but—"

"And I will not."

"Bessie can stay with us and everything will be all right."

"I stay with you," chimed in Bessie, "never!"

"Well, then yer can keep away; that's all."

"I wish you would not bother me any more. You may sell the dear old home and buy it, but understand that I am not included in the sale," said Mary.

Mary had cause to regret her hasty words the next day when the property was sold.

"You know I was very easy with you all the time, and now—"

"Yes, you got all the money on the mortgage you could get, and now you will sell the property. You are very kind and obliging, indeed," she added with a sneer.

"Oh! Yer needn't talk that way. I—"

"But I will talk that way, and no one can stop me from doing so."

"Then I must let you talk," said Jim, smiling pleasantly. He knew that this was the last chance he had to talk to her on that important question, so he kept from showing his anger in her presence.

"Mary, I know this can all be shaped yet, but—"

"No, I wish you would leave, for I wish to be alone the few last hours I can remain in the old home."

"Mary, you can remain here, ef—"

"I remain here? Not I."

Jim was cross by this time, and left the house. "Then it will be a sell, ef she's so smart as all that," he said to himself."

Mary said very little, but Bessie was greatly displeased at Jim's impudence. "It is too bad," she said. "We promised Grammy Moser to call on her and spend the evening with her. It is late now, but I am not afraid to go with you and if it is dark. I know she will be glad to see us."

Mary objected to going. It was late and she wanted to retire at an early hour. She wished to rise

early in the morning to get the house in order for the coming sale.

At the time Jim was parleying with Mary, his friends were waiting for him not far distant to accompany them to a neighboring house to play cards.

"Well, Jim, late as ever," said one, as Jim came lounging along.

"Yes, late," growled Jim, still out of humor. "I—"

"What success did you have this evening with Mary?" enquired one of his friends, interrupting him.

"Oh, success!" said Jim in a surly tone. "She is as mean an' overbearin' as ever."

"You don't say."

Jim changed his voice and spoke in a lower tone. "I really believe that she is gettin' crazy."

"You don't say," repeated his friend again.

"Well, I did say it," repeated Jim pettishly.

Jim's friends were always anxious to have fun at his expense.

"What makes you think so?" they asked him.

"She acts as—" Jim did not finish, and changed his talk. "I will not put up with her notions any longer. Mind what I say."

"Then you will sell the property to-morrow, an' be done with her."

"Yes, I will, an' mind what I tell yous, I—"

"You will buy the property," said his friend, interrupting him.

"My intentions were to buy it, but I fear she got ahead of me. You see, that is the way if a person is

too kind. She gave me to understand that other people had as much right to buy the property as I had."

"There!" they cried. "What is she up to anyway?"

"It is hard to know what she is up to," continued Jim. "You see, she is mighty keerful with her earnings, besides she did not pay anything on the mertgage for some time and may have a little money now.

"Do you think she is able to buy the property?"

"I don't know. She may get help somewhere. Some one of her church smarties may lend her some money and then she will be able to buy it."

After some consultation it was agreed that it might be some put-up job and he might be beaten at the end.

By this time they had reached the house of their friend and sat down to a table to play cards. They could not play well without something to drink, and the bottle was handed around frequently. Towards midnight Jim was partly intoxicated and his comrades had many a joke at his expense. The game still went on and Jim was the loser and was getting low in money.

"Here goes Mary," said one of the players as he threw the queen of spades on the table before Jim. His friends had a hearty laugh and he was greatly insulted. He rose from his chair, uttered an oath, threw the cards he had in his hand upon the floor, and declared that he would play no longer.

One of the party tried to persuade him to continue playing. He was about as drunk as Jim. They be-

gan to quarrel and pushed and tucked each other until they fell on the table. Table, tallow candle and all fell in a heap on the floor. Their comrades tried to part them, but the brute nature had the best of them, and they pummeled and pounded each other at a terrible rate as they rolled around on the floor.

The poor worn-down woman of the house sat near the fire-place, with her poorly-clad child in her arms, weeping. Her husband seized a piece of firewood and swore he would dash out Jim's brains. This created a general fight and several received severe bruises. They all left when the fight was over, swearing vengeance on the house and the occupants.

Jim was still dissatisfied. He threatened to go to Mary's home and ransack the house. Some of his comrades, who had less of the brute nature in themselves than he had, persuaded him to go home.

The two sisters sat talking and making plans for the future until it was quite late in the evening. They decided it was best for them to go to "Grammy Moser," take care of her as if she was their mother, and remain with her as long as she lived.

Mary concluded this the best plan. She could then do work for the neighbors and earn enough money to send Bessie to a boarding school, where she could secure an education.

The greatest annoyance to Bessie was that Jim DeStay had called and annoyed them that evening—the last evening they had to spend in the dear old home.

When the sisters retired Mary went to the window and looked in the direction Charles had taken the last

evening she saw him. She lingered a few moments. Bessie lovingly embraced her.

"Mary," she said, "papa told us to put our trust in God and everything would go well with us."

"You dear little sister," said Mary, "if we will put our trust in God He will not forsake us in our troubles, I know."

The next morning the two sisters rose with the sun. They went to the yard and garden and observed every shrub and vine. How dear they were to them. They took especial pains to have the house and furniture neat and clean for the coming sale.

When Jim awoke the next morning he was lying broad on his back on the straw in his barn. He rubbed his eyes and looked around for some time. At last he knew where he was. His head ached and he was not in good humor. He went to the house, drank a cup of strong coffee, and ate a small piece of bread. After awhile he felt better.

He now recalled the time of the sale. He wished to look as respectable as possible. He took especial interest in his toilet, bathed his face with cold water and brushed his clothes.

After making these preparations he left for the sale, where he arrived late. In spite of his carousing during the past night, he looked quite respectable.

He saw Mary and Bessie standing alone. He pitied them, but consoled himself by thinking that Mary was a mean, stubborn girl or she would marry him.

CHARLES MOSER WITH HIS MOTHER ON HIS RETURN HOME.
"Dear old mother!" he said, "Do not be alarmed."

CHAPTER XXX

CHARLES IN HIS MOTHER'S HOUSE

AT the time the two sisters were bewailing their misfortunes, Grammy Moser sat in her rocking chair with her knitting in her hands and her open Bible on the table before her.

She had left the door unbolted, thinking that Mary and Bessie would call during the evening.

Charles saw the light as he approached the house. He appeared at the window, and looked cautiously through a gap in the curtain and saw his mother sitting before him.

A low rap sounded on the door, and she awoke from her reverie.

"Come in, dear," she said, thinking it was Mary. The door was opened, and a tall young man in a handsome suit of clothes entered the room. He cast an admiring glance at her. She had changed. Her forehead was full of wrinkles, and her hair was thin and gray.

Mrs. Moser dropped her knitting in alarm. She adjusted her spectacles and stared at him, but could not utter a word.

Charles could hardly refrain from rushing in her arms and proclaiming his identity.

"Dear old mother!" he said. "Do not be alarmed. I will not harm you."

These words seemed to pacify her.

Charles took a hasty survey of the kitchen. In the corner stood the same old clock. The stove stood at the same place. The wood-chest stood behind the stove, and the old antlers, which his father had been so proud of, still hung by the side of the door. Everything looked as it did when he left home.

Summoning courage again, he said: "Mother, are you reading and knitting at so late an hour?"

"Yes, I spend most of the time during the evenings in reading and knitting. I cannot find anything better to pass the time."

"You surely do not spend the evenings all alone?"

The old lady was somewhat surprised at this question, but answered truthfully and unhesitatingly: "I am alone most of the time, except when my neighbors call on me. I had expected company this evening, but it is now getting late and I think they will not come."

Charles tried to make himself known to his mother without exciting her. So he continued his questions; besides, he wished to get information about Mary, if possible.

"You surely do not live all alone in this lonely place?"

Mrs. Moser would not tell a falsehood, should it cost her life, and she answered: "I am all alone. No one lives with me."

"Have you no children to take care of you in your old age?" inquired Charles eagerly.

"I have a daughter, but she is married and lives in her own home not far distant. They have a nice home

and live happily together, and I don't think that they would leave their home and come to live here. You see, it is an out-of-the-way place, but it is the old home in which I lived so long, and I cannot get it into my mind to leave. My daughter frequently calls on me and assists to clean the house and do some other work."

"Have you no son who could take you to his home and care for you?"

"I had a son, but he left home ten years ago, and not a trace of him could be found, and now I mourn him as dead."

"Are you certain that he is dead? Might he not still be living?"

"He might still be living, for all I know, but I doubt it. My good, kind boy would not remain away from his old mother so long if still living."

She drew a handkerchief from her pocket and wiped the tears from her eyes. She continued: "I know he is dead or he would come back to me. It is too bad. I was very unkind to him, and he left home. I never heard of him since."

Charles longed to clasp his mother in his arms and tell her who he was, but he could not summon courage to do so. She was old, and he knew not what might happen were he to tell her.

"Would you forgive your son, were he to come home again?" he said.

"I forgive him!" she cried. "I would ask his forgiveness on my knees. I would clasp him in my arms and weep tears of joy."

"You would weep tears of joy, and he was to blame for all the trouble."

"No, he was not to blame. I was too hasty. I was to blame for all. He was a manly boy. I was unreasonable in my talk. He was tender-hearted, and I hurt his feelings. I had never talked to him so before."

She stopped speaking and looked at Charles, but resumed again: "Yes, he loved a young lady. I was informed of their intended marriage, and objected to it, for I needed his help. It was a great mistake on my part, but I did not understand it at that time as I do now. She would have made a good and loving wife, and we could all have lived happily together."

"I suppose she is married by this time, and—"

His mother interrupted him: "Indeed not! She's waiting for my son to return. She had frequent offers for marriage, but she declined them all. She is a good, kind girl and does all she can for me. She never harbors any ill feelings against anyone. But so it is. To-morrow morning the property will be sold by the sheriff, and what will become of the poor girl I don't know. Mr. DeStay had a mortgage against her father's property, but he and his wife died, and now his son Jim is selling the property more for revenge than anything else."

"For revenge!" cried Charles.

"Yes, for revenge. He wanted her to marry him, but she continually refuses, and now he will sell the property and, I think, will buy it."

"He will not not buy it!" said Charles excitedly.

She glanced at him.

"Who can hinder him from buying it?" she said. "He has plenty of money. The poor girl has no money, and I do not think anyone will buy it for her."

"I will buy the property myself," said Charles.

"You will?" she said. "What use would you have for it? You do not look like a working man, and—"

"Would you know your son should you meet him again?" said Charles, changing the conversation abruptly.

"Would I know him? Nothing can erase his image from my mind." She ceased talking, but resumed again. "I shall never see him again. I am now old and will soon be in my grave; then all will be over and I will be out of my trouble."

Here the conversation ended for the time.

Charles was astonished. "Can it be possible that my mother has so much love for me? She has no cause to repent," he thought. "I am the cause of all this trouble."

At length Mother Moser thought of retiring. She looked at the clock. "Stranger," she said, "it is now my usual time to retire. It is getting late, and you had better leave or you might not be able to get accommodations at the hotel. It is not far distant."

To her surprise Charles replied: "Mother, you certainly will not compel me to leave at this late hour. It is dark and I might miss my way, besides, the hotel may be closed."

"I am all alone. I have no accommodations for strangers. You knew it was getting late, and you should have left before this time."

"But you will not send me out of the house at this late hour. You need fear no harm from me."

"You look like a respectable young man. Your intentions may be good, but nowadays it is hard to know what some of these fine-looking, well-dressed young men are up to."

Charles was endeavoring to lead her to the fact that he was her son, without exciting her.

"I want a good night's rest, such as I did not have for years, and—"

"This is no hotel. I can not tolerate strangers in my house. I am poor, and have no money. If you are—"

"I am not seeking your money, and will not harm you. It is late now, and all I want is a good night's rest."

"You could have left before it was so late, and—"

Charles interrupted her. "Would you send your own son out of your house, should he ask you to remain over night?"

The old lady relented at once. She thought of her son, how he was among strangers, if still living; and how willingly she would allow him to remain during the night. It was a hard question for her to answer.

"That is entirely different from this," she said, looking at him. "But," she continued, "you may remain here. You can sleep in my son's room. His

books and some things are in the room as he left them, and I hope you will not molest anything. Their value is trifling to you, but to me—" She ceased to speak and buried her face in her hands.

"Mother, I will not harm anything in this house. All I want is a good night's rest—such as I did not have for—"

Here she interrupted him. "I will trust you. It would be wrong not to do so. Here is the light. You will go into the room to the right." She opened the door and pointed upstairs towards the room. "I hope you will have a good night's rest."

Charles took the light. "Good night, mother," he said politely.

"It is my custom to read my Bible and have my prayer before I retire. I hope I will not disturb you," she said as she bade him good night.

"Disturb me!" cried Charles. "I will remain with you if you do not object."

"You will? Why should I object?" said his mother as she drew the Bible towards herself. "You are, indeed, welcome to remain."

She read a chapter and offered a prayer. She took her Hymnal, and after a short pause she began to sing the familiar hymn—

"Alone, and yet not alone am I
In this lone wilderness;
I feel my Savior always nigh;
He comes the weary hours to bless.
I am with Him, and He with me,
E'en here alone I cannot be"

in a low, sweet, solemn voice. Her voice had not been raised many moments, when Charles joined her with his strong, deep, bass voice.

She stopped singing and looked at him. "Where did you learn that hymn?" she asked excitedly.

"From my mother and father," he replied. "We never retired before reading a chapter from the Bible, singing a hymn and having prayer."

"Then I can trust you, if you have not forgotten their teachings; but too frequently young men when away from home forget the teachings of their parents and wander away." She stopped speaking.

Mother Moser now had more confidence in Charles and felt very sorry that she had talked so rashly to him.

"What would I say, would my only son, if still living, ask to remain over night at some place and would be refused the hospitality of the house?" she thought. "But my son—" She was interrupted.

Charles arose, took the light again and passed up the familiar stairs. As he closed the door he said to himself: "Now for a good old-fashioned sleep under mother's roof."

He opened the door to his room. The same bed that he had occupied years before stood before him, nice and clean. The rude-fashioned writing table, which he had constructed for himself and used so frequently, stood in the corner opposite the bed. His books were on the same shelf where he had left them.

His old rifle stood behind the door; he instantly reached for it.

"Well, old pet," he said, "are you still here? We—"

He ceased speaking. Then he resumed as he placed the rifle aside: "We spent many a happy day together at the mountain. You stood idle a long time, but you shall have some exercise in the near future, I assure you." He took his Latin grammar from the shelf and opened it. He turned over leaf after leaf. A picture fell on the floor before him. He picked it up and gazed at it for some time. The eyes looked softly upon him. It was the picture of his Mary. At last he said: "Is it possible that I trifled thus with your love? Oh, miserable man that I am! We could have had many happy, happy days together in this time. But mother tells me that you are still waiting for me, and happy I shall be when we meet and I can call you my own."

Charles gazed at the picture for some time. He placed it aside and amused himself by reading the interlieings and the various memoranda he had made of his friends and classmates. He sat down on his bed for some time; at last he disrobed and retired. He could not sleep. The events of the day could not be so easily dismissed from his mind.

In fancy he saw his mother come and survey the bed as she had done in years gone by before she left him till the dawn. He again heard the pattering of the rain upon the shingle roof and the wind sighing

among the trees. He again roamed along the hills and streams with his friends hunting and fishing. He again stole silently from the house to become a wanderer from home and friends. These and a thousand recollections flitted through his feverish brain.

He frequently raised himself on his elbows and looked at the pale moon as it shone into the room through the window. His mind was bewildered by puzzling questions as the hours wore slowly on. At last he fell into a sound sleep. He awoke with a start. He looked about him. Where was he? He heard a noise. His mother was building a fire in the kitchen stove.

He arose, dressed hastily and left the room. As he did so, he turned and cast a lingering look towards the book-shelves. He returned, took the picture of Mary from its hiding place and looked at it again. Tears came to his eyes.

"Had I been as much of a gentleman as you were a lady—" He stopped talking, but resumed again: "That sneak thief, if he ever crosses my path, I—" He stopped again. Then he resumed: "Mary, if it is God's will, I will make amends for all the pain I have caused you."

He placed the picture into his pocket and turned to leave the room. He was not master of himself. His books seemed to beckon to him. He again took them from the shelf one by one and amused himself for some time, and then placed them aside and went downstairs.

CHAPTER XXXI

MRS. MOSER considered for awhile after Charles had left the room. She did not feel safe after all with the young stranger in the house. She formed all sorts of conjectures, in spite of the confidence she had placed in him.

"Perhaps he will come down-stairs during the night and rob or murder me," she thought.

She went to a drawer, got a piece of iron and placed it firmly over the latch of the door. She looked at it for some time.

"I don't think he can come down now if he wishes to do so," she said.

After taking these precautions she took her Bible and a tallow candle to her room and placed them on the table before her bed. A chill ran over her as she did so.

"Can it be possible that I am perhaps sheltering a robber or a murderer? Who knows what trouble this young man may bring upon me? What shall I do?" she said, as she wrung her hands in despair.

Though a brave woman, she was at her wits' end. She sat down on her bed and tried to read, but she could not do so. Her mind was bewildered, and she was disturbed by the least noise that occurred.

Several times she thought she heard some noise in the attic. She listened for some time. She heard it

again. She feared that the stranger was coming down-stairs, and prepared to leave the house. It was dark and late and she could not think of going out alone.

She unbolted the door of her room and stole silently into the kitchen. The door to the attic was still securely fastened. "What shall I do? Shall I leave the house or shall I bear the consequences, whatever they may be?" were the foremost thoughts in her mind.

"I will remain in the house," she said. Then she considered a moment. "I will put my trust in God. It is the best I can do."

She retraced her steps to her room and closed the door. The door creaked as she closed it. She trembled. At any other time she would not have noticed it, but now it seemed to have an evil boding in its sound. She stood spell-bound; then she bolted the door, rushed to her bed and drew her Bible closer as a shield to protect herself from harm.

"It is very strange," she said musing, "that this stranger came to my house to remain over night. I think he could have gotten better accommodations at the hotel than at my humble home."

She sat a long time, fearing to move lest he should hear her. She again heard a slight noise and quickly tucked her feet under the quilts of her bed. She listened for some time. She heard nothing more than the occasional moaning of the wind in the trees and the rattling of the windows. She became more and

more absorbed in her reading and less and less suspicious of the stranger. At last her head sank on her Bible and she fell into a restless sleep.

The conversation during the evening again brought the image of her long-lost son to her mind. She saw him in her dreams come across the field towards the house from his work. Then, again, she saw him as he came home after his long absence. How she kissed and embraced him.

A change came over her in her dreams. She beheld Mary and her sister standing before Jim DeStay and the High Sheriff pleading for their home. How she longed to assist them. She saw the scowl on Jim DeStay's face as he turned a deaf ear to the pleadings of the two sisters. Then she saw a stranger step before the crowd and bid on the property. His face seemed familiar to her. Then, again, she saw Jim DeStay and his pals rush on him in their madness. She shrieked. She awoke with a start. She stared about the room. The light was burned out and the sun was shining through the window into the room.

At first she could not fix her thoughts. Presently she thought of the stranger.

"Here I am all alone, and sitting and sleeping until broad day light, and this stranger in my house. What may have happened no one knows," she said to herself.

She went out of the room into the kitchen and looked at the door which she had secured so well, thinking that the stranger had come down-stairs un-

beknown to her, but she found it the same as she had left it the night before.

She looked around the kitchen. Everything was as she had left it. She did not trust to go up-stairs for fear of the stranger, nor did she trust to leave the house should he still remain in it. In her bewildered state of mind she went to the stove and began to build the fire to prepare her breakfast.

She thought she heard a noise in the room in the attic. She listened. He was walking in the room. She listened again and heard him open the door and come down-stairs. She hastily snatched away the iron from the latch. He opened the door and greeted her with a pleasant "Good morning."

Mrs. Moser was now all smiles.

"You must have slept very soundly," she said.

"Indeed I did, and it was the best night's rest I had for some time," he answered.

"How strange," said Mrs. Moser as she chuckled to herself, "that this stranger should enjoy a good night's sleep in my humble home, and such a well dressed young man at that." But her fears again came over her. "Perhaps he ran away from some place and hid here, thinking no one would look for him in my house," she continued.

Charles went out of doors. He stood near the house, and gazed over the field and yard in front of the house. Memories of the past flitted before his mind's eye. He went to the spring near by. He took a drink of its sparkling water. As he did so he looked

up at the side of the house. Before him lay part of the fishing rod he had placed there before he left home.

"Well, well!" he said as he again glanced at it. "You had very bad usage since I was gone, and you will not be of much use to me now."

He returned to the house and tried to make himself known to his mother by his movements, but could not do so.

Mrs. Moser took particular pride in setting her table. She was determined to invite him to partake of her scanty board. Nor was this all. She took particular notice of his fine clothes and his gold watch chain. Her gaze followed him wherever he went.

"Well, mother," said Charles, at the same time casting a longing look at the table, "I must leave you now. I thank you kindly for the good bed you gave me and the good night's rest I enjoyed in your house. I think this will pay you for your trouble." He handed a piece of money to her, but she waved him away.

Then, in spite of herself, she grasped his hand and shook it familiarly. Then, recalling herself, she said: "You must not leave now. You are welcome to remain and eat with me, provided you are satisfied with the scanty meal I have to place before you."

Charles accepted the invitation. "Nothing will please me better," he said. He seated himself at the table with the keen appetite of a man who had not tasted food for several days, while at the same time his mother watched all his movements.

He had won her sympathy. She was very open and free with him in her conversation during the meal. She related many of her trials and troubles to him. He sympathized with her, and even offered her any assistance she might ask of him.

After he had finished his meal, he rose from the table, handed her a gold coin to pay for his lodging and breakfast, and bidding her good-bye, left the house.

She turned the coin over and over in her hand.

"It is too much," she said to herself. "I should not have accepted it."

She rose from her chair and looked after him as he walked down the path across the field towards the road.

"He is a gentleman, indeed, and how familiar he seems to me," she said. "I declare, I forgot to ask him his name and from whence he came. Well, what good does it do me anyway? I do not expect to see him again," she continued.

She proceeded to get the kitchen in order, but stopped suddenly as she thought of her son's books in the room in the attic.

"Is it possible? I never thought of going to Charlie's room. Oh, dear! Perhaps this young man has stolen all his books." So saying, she rushed up-stairs as fast as her feeble limbs would carry her. She opened the door and peered into the room. Everything was at its place. She entered the room and scrutinized every book carefully. Finding the room and books in

perfect order, she again retraced her steps down-stairs, and seated herself in her rocking chair and shaded her eyes with her hand.

She sat a few moments absorbed in thought, for this was a difficult problem for her to solve. Presently her daughter entered the kitchen. She was on her way home from the village store and had gone out of her way to call on her mother, for she was also worrying about Mary Brown and her sister.

A great change came over the countenance of the old lady. She motioned her daughter to a chair by her side.

Her daughter, on seeing her mother, became very much alarmed. "Mother, are you sick?" she cried.

"No, I am not sick, but I am in great trouble all morning. I hardly know what to do."

Her daughter thought that she referred to Mary Brown and her sister, and answered abruptly: "I know of no other way for you to do than to take Mary and Bessie into your home and allow them to remain with you until they can find a home of their own. I am continually thinking about them myself. I hardly know what to do."

The mother stared at her daughter; then she said: "There is still another trouble—"

"Another trouble!" cried Alberta, interrupting her. "What can it be?"

Then Mrs. Moser related the story. How the young stranger had come to her home and remained over night; how he had sung the familiar old hymn with

her; how he had sympathized with her in her trouble, and how well he had paid her for his night's lodging and breakfast.

"You did not allow him to remain in the house during the night while you were all alone? Did you?" fairly shrieked her daughter. "I tremble for you when I think of it."

"Yes, he remained over night. How could I help it? He would not go away. I told him the hotel was not far distant; but, still, he insisted upon remaining here."

"He insisted upon remaining!" cried the daughter. "Then he was no gentleman."

"Oh, yes, he was!" replied the mother rather indignantly. "He was a perfect gentleman in every respect."

"Then why did he not leave as a gentleman should have done?"

The mother was puzzled. "He begged to remain and enjoy a good night's rest."

"There is something wrong about that young man," said the daughter, her fears thoroughly aroused. "I think you sheltered a robber—perhaps a murderer. Who knows?"

"I do not think so," replied the mother. "I—"

Her daughter interrupted her.

"Did you look after Charlie's room and books?" she cried excitedly, for she knew with what jealous care her mother kept watch over her brother's room and books.

"Yes, I did, and found everything in perfect order," answered the mother.

The daughter now thought of the stranger who had passed her house the evening before.

"Mother, was he a tall, well built and well dressed young man?" said she.

"Yes, indeed!" she answered, "he was tall and—"

"Did he carry a valise and an old cane?" interrupted the daughter.

"Indeed not!" cried her mother indignantly. "He had no old cane and valise. I wonder what such a fine, well dressed young man would do with an old cane anyway. I suppose to walk with."

"Well, mother," said the daughter, "times have changed. Years ago the old men used canes to walk with, but nowadays the young men use canes to show off with. I believe—"

"What do you believe?" queried her mother, interrupting.

"I believe that the very young man that you are talking about passed my home last evening when it was getting dusk."

The old lady and her daughter spoke for some time about the stranger. Finally they agreed to go to the sale and ascertain whether he was there.

On approaching the yard adjoining the house she was accosted by one of her neighbors, who was standing at the gate: "Mrs. Moser, do you want to attend the sale?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Moser abruptly.

"Old Jim DeStay has some opposition this time. He does not have his own way, as is generally the case."

Mrs. Moser stared at him, not understanding what he meant.

"A young man is bidding on the property, and I think he will get it," said the man as he chuckled to himself.

"Indeed!" cried Mrs. Moser, immediately thinking of the young man who had remained over night in her house.

"The sheriff does not want to accept his bid, but—"

"He has a right to bid on the property!" cried Mrs. Moser indignantly, interrupting the speaker.

"Of course he has," retorted her neighbor; "but, you see, the sheriff fears that the young man does not have the 'ready cash.' Well, perhaps he is working in Jim's favor, for all I know."

"The ready cash!" chimed in his young daughter, who was standing by his side. "I bet he has plenty of money. He has a gold watch, a gold chain, and ever so nice a ring on his finger. Did I not see it? Sure I did."

"That may be true," said her father, smiling, but that does not prove that he has plenty of money."

Mrs. Moser opened the gate and passed into the yard. As she did so, she heard a noise and loud bursts of laughter in the house and yard.

CHAPTER XXXII

CHARLES LEAVES HIS MOTHER'S HOUSE AND GOES TO THE SALE

WHEN Charles Moser left his mother's house he was more hopeful than the evening before. He knew that Mary was still living and waiting for him. It was several hours until the time of sale. He went to the hotel, secured his cane and valise, and then walked leisurely to the slate quarry not far distant.

The making of slate was a new development in the place and a novelty to him. He saw the men loosen the slate, make them into small blocks, carry them out of the quarry on their backs, and then split and dress them.

He frequently drew his watch from his pocket and looked at it. He was impatient to see his Mary, as he still called her.

As he lingered at the quarry he entered into a conversation with several men. He saw a young man standing on the rubbish bank waving his arms and frequently speaking in an unknown language to him.

Charles noticed that the young man was in trouble, and so asked the superintendent: "What ails that young man? I don't understand him, but I think he is in trouble."

"Yes," said the superintendent, "he came across the ocean several years ago. He left a mother, sister

and a young lady love in the Ould Country, and he is continually pining to go home. I do not see how the poor fellow can ever go home, for he does not work, and I cannot imagine how he ever expects to get the money to go. I fear that he will commit suicide sometime."

Charles had sympathy for the young man. He remembered the trials and troubles he himself had had.

"Tell him to get ready and go home," said Charles.

"How can he?" said the superintendent, eyeing Charles. "He has no money to pay for his passage. If he would—"

"Tell him to get ready to go," said Charles with a nod of his head.

The superintendent looked at Charles in a questioning manner. Then he said: "He has no money, and I do not expect anyone to be foolish enough to spend a lot of money on him to go home."

"I will see to it that he will get the money to go," answered Charles.

"Do you really mean what you say, young man?"

"Certainly! Tell him to get ready," said Charles as he walked down the path at the rubbish bank.

Charles sauntered to the sale. Things were now changed, but still he noticed places where he with Mary had spent many happy moments.

The superintendent lost no time to tell the young man what Charles had said, and urged him to get ready to go.

"Who is the gentleman?" said one of the workmen, who was standing by. He seems to be very free

with his money. I wish he would hand some to me. if he has any."

The superintendent was beaten. He seated himself on a block of slate and stared at the workmen.

"I really do not know. I forgot to ask him his name and where he is from," said he.

This raised a laugh among the workmen, and the superintendent skulked out of the way as best he could. He kept shy all day, for the men never tired of teasing him about the young man who promised to pay the passage home for their friend.

But one of the men had confidence in the stranger He knew that he was a young laird from the Ould Country and would keep to his promise. All the young lairds always had plenty of money. They did not have it by the dollar like the Americans, but by the pound. They could spend lots of money and never miss it.

As Charles Moser drew near the house, he saw Jim DeStay, his arch enemy, and some other people standing by the side of the sheriff in the yard.

"Well, Jim," said Charles to himself as a chill ran over his body, "one of us will be beaten to-day. I hope I will be the successful one this time."

He referred to the sale, however.

Jim DeStay noticed Charles as he walked into the yard, and he immediately recalled Mary's threat. "I wonder what that dandy wants here?" he said to himself somewhat nervously.

The time of sale was at hand. The sheriff entered the kitchen of the house, stepped on a low box and read the conditions of sale. Charles drew near, but his mind wandered and he could not collect his thoughts. He looked anxiously around the room to see Mary, but he looked in vain. The curious drew near and eyed him closely, but he paid no heed to them.

The sheriff described the property briefly and was ready to receive bids. After a few moments' delay Jim bid the amount of the mortgage and the costs. The sheriff called for other bids, but no one responded. Jim now became very jovial with his friends. He would soon own another farm, for he now doubted if anyone would bid against him. In his ecstasy he called out, at the same time winking at the sheriff and the bystanders: "Sell the girl along with the farm; perhaps you can get more for both."

"Is it possible that this brute undertakes to insult Mary in the presence of these people? She is poorer than he is, but not half so ignorant," thought Charles as he fumbled nervously with his watch chain.

"Here is a chance for you young men," cried the sheriff. "The girl goes with the property. She will make a good and loving wife for anyone of you."

"Just listen to that," cried Regina as she raised an apple in her hand to throw at the sheriff, but was constrained by one of the bystanders from doing so.

"You must not throw at him. He is an officer of the law, and you may get into trouble," he said.

"Officer or no officer," cried she. "He has no right to insult the young lady. She is more respectable than he is anyway."

Charles' keen eyes scanned the faces of the bystanders. It was apparent to him that few of them enjoyed the joke, but that many pitied Mary.

"Do you sell human beings here?" he cried before he thought of what he was doing.

Many of the bystanders gazed at Charles and wagged their heads, denouncing the actions of the sheriff.

"I never heard a sheriff make such mean remarks. They are too low to think about. He insults the young lady just to please that sneak thief," said a bystander pointing towards Jim.

"Now, boys, let me hear from you," cried the sheriff. "This may be the last chance you will ever have to buy—"

Charles' blood was up. He did not feel inclined to let the joke pass off so easily, and before the sheriff had finished, he cried out: "Do you sell ladies here?"

"We have no time to parley with strangers," said the sheriff, showing very plainly that he was stung by Charles' remark. "We will go on with the sale. Jim DeStay bids the amount of the mortgage and the costs, and if there are no further bids, the property will be sold to Jim DeStay for the sum of six hundred dollars." He stopped a moment, but began again: "There are no further bids—"

"One hundred dollars," said Charles, interrupting.

Jim was astonished. He took a step or two forward, but again moved back. He did not like the de-

termined look of the stranger. He had had his own way with these unpretending farmers, but this was now a new turn of affairs.

"Another hundred," he stammered.

"Another hundred," said Charles before Jim had barely spoken the words.

Silence prevailed for a few moments, and the bystanders took their turns in eyeing Charles.

"Another hundred," said Jim, smiling nervously, for he noticed that Charles was interested in the property.

Charles hesitated a few moments, and the bystanders were thereby deceived.

"I say, stranger," said one of them pleadingly, "can't you do a little better? Make Jim DeStay hop a little."

"Another hundred," said Charles.

"Ten dollars," cried Jim.

"Oh, ho!" cried one of the crowd. "Jim, you are coming down somewhat in your bids. You must do better."

"Another hundred," cried Charles.

"That's it. Give it to him, stranger," called several in unison, at the same time patting Charles on his shoulders. "Don't stop yet. The property is worth a great deal more."

There was a short pause, and the sheriff looked at Jim as he said: "Your bid is off, Mr. DeStay."

Jim grew pale. He hesitated. Then he looked at the sheriff in a pleading way.

"Another ten," he said, and stepped back into the crowd.

"Another hundred," said Charles before Jim had barely finished.

"Jim, you must do better than that," cried one of the crowd roaring with laughter, "and if it will take all your change."

Jim made no reply. The sheriff walked to his side and spoke to him in a low voice. Then, turning, he said to Charles: "Stranger, do you know that the conditions require you to pay the mortgage and costs of sale before the deed is granted?"

"I think I do," answered Charles.

The sheriff stared at Charles, then turned to Jim as he said: "Mr. DeStay, your bid is off."

Jim could hardly brook a defeat. He fumbled in his pockets with his hands, while his feet almost danced a jig, and without looking up he said: "Another ten."

"Another hundred," said Charles with a merry twinkle in his eye.

Jim made no further bid. The bystanders laughed heartily, and the sheriff was greatly annoyed. He spoke to Jim in a low tone.

"I am off," snapped Jim sarcastically. "Now collect the money."

"Looks as if Jim was out of cash a'ready," whispered Regina, who gloried in Jim's defeat.

"There is another chance," whispered the sheriff to Jim. "Perhaps he does not have the money. Then

I will immediately re-sell the property and not take another bid from him. That is the only way to get rid of the fellow."

"That's it! That's the idear!" said Jim excitedly, seeing a faint glimmer of hope in the suggestion of the sheriff.

"The property is sold to you, stranger," said the sheriff. "You will give your name and make satisfaction."

The crowd drew closer to Charles. Some applauded him, while others feared that he did not have the money to make payment with.

Mary now moved unconsciously out of the adjoining room. A thrill passed through Charles' body when he beheld his loved one. It unnerved him.

"Mary Brown will pay you," he stammered, for he could hardly move his tongue in his mouth.

"What!" said the sheriff excitedly, removing the cigar stump from his mouth. "I did not sell the property to Mary Brown. I sold it to you, and from you I demand the money. I am not dealing with ladies."

"You take the pleasure of insulting them, do you not?"

This was a direct slap at the sheriff. He walked thoughtfully around in the room, occasionally casting a glance at Charles. He did not wish to be too quick in calling on the sale.

After awhile the sheriff spoke again. "Stranger, I sold the property to you, and from you I demand the money."

"It makes no difference who will pay you. I am sure the lady will pay you if you demand the money from her."

Regina gloried in Jim's defeat. She had a great deal of confidence in the stranger.

"Mary," she cried, "don't git skeered. It will come out a'right. Mind what I tole you."

"That's just what I expected of you young man. A great deal of show and no money. But you are out of the game this time, mind what I say."

"He is one of your fine dandies. What do you think of the dandy anyway?" said Jim sarcastically, making a wry face at the crowd.

The sheriff again mounted the box to re-sell the property. He looked at Charles with an evil eye, then in a commanding tone he said: "Look here, stranger, I now give you fair warning that your bid will not be accepted again. We have enough of your show. If you interfere again with this sale, you will rue it. The first bid was made by James DeStay and—"

Charles interrupted him. "You sold the property," he said, "and I warn you not to sell it again." At the same time he took a wallet well filled with bank notes from his pocket, being very careful to display the money. Then he added as he turned to the sheriff: "Now, Mr. Sheriff, here is your money. You will make that deed to Mary Brown. Remember what I tell you."

Jim glanced at the money and then at Charles. He knew that all hopes for securing the property was

now at an end. Bessie naughtily clapped her hands as she danced for joy. The bystanders expected more fun and were not in a hurry to leave.

"I guess the young man is a lawyer," said an elderly farmer as he lit his pipe and took a good whiff at it, at the same time looking slyly at Jim.

"You mean a liar," said Jim in retort. "He looks like one. I bet all the money he has is stolen money."

"Jim DeStay," cried Charles as he placed aside his valise and cane, "I know you only too well. I was Charlie Moser one time. Now I am Charles Moser. Ten years ago you and your pals gave me a beating; now you are giving me an unasked for opportunity to return it with interest."

Jim turned deathly pale. He jumped out through an open window on the porch, while his friends skulked back awkwardly into the crowd, fearing that some bodily punishment was in store for them.

"Stranger," cried the sheriff, "I—I—am—an—of—fi—cer—of—the—law, you—see. You—must—not—make—any—disturbance—here, or—you—see, I—I—"

"Ah, Jim De-Stay! Ye brat!" cried Regina, at the same time hurling the apple, which she had in her hand, at his face. "Ye made trouble enough a'ready. If yous ware in Bosting, yous would git hung."

At the moment Regina was talking, Charles' mother and sister reached the porch of the house.

"Don't go into the house, Mrs. Moser," said one of her friends as she drew near and was in the act of entering. "You may get hurt, for they are having a high time in there. Charlie bought the property and is cleaning house. He just threw Jim DeStay out of the window, and I expect the sheriff will follow soon. I tell you, Jim came out at a lively rate."

Mrs. Moser stared at the gentleman, for she could not comprehend what he was saying.

"What Charlie?" said she at last.

"Your son, of course. He just bought the property and is taking possession of it by throwing out some of the varmints," he said as he chuckled to himself. "He is a mighty clever young man. He has plenty of cash in his pockets. Did I not see it? Sure I did," he added with a significant wink.

Mrs. Moser recalled the familiar face of the evening before. She entered the room. There stood her long lost son, surrounded by many of his old-time friends. She rushed into his arms. "Charlie, my son," she cried. She could say no more.

At the same time Alberta entered the room. She laid her hand familiarly on his shoulder as she said: "Well, Charlie, you big brother, my little daughter really was right when she said her uncle wanted to speak with her when you passed my home last evening, but for the life of me I did not know you. You changed very much."

But Charles was impatient to see his Mary and learn his fate. Taking his mother and sister by the

hand, he crossed the room to where Mary was standing.

"Mary," he stammered. He stopped speaking. Then he began again: "Mary—you—" A lump came into his throat. He tried to swallow it down. "Mary," he began again, but hesitated.

"You are a long time in saying what you want to say," said Mary pleasantly as she placed both hands in his.

Charles stared at her for a moment, then he took courage anew. "Mary, now you have a home again. May I remain here to enjoy it with you?" he said.

Mary looked at him lovingly as she wiped the tears from her cheeks. Then with sudden emotions she said: "Charlie, you may."

"Now, Charlie," said his mother pleasantly, "this afternoon our minister will have special services in church. I hope you will attend to this matter at once. Don't let any grass grow under your feet."

"Mary!" cried Regina, "didn't I tell yous that he would come back again?"

"Yes, you did," said Mary; "that is true, but he was a long time in coming."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE MARRIAGE OF CHARLES AND MARY IN THE OLD HOME CHURCH

THE pastor had prepared an interesting and instructive sermon for this special occasion, and the young people and their aged parents sat with devout attention as the precious words fell from his lips.

The sermon finished, the aged pastor closed the Bible, offered a prayer, and announced a hymn, which was sung by the congregation, while the deacons took up the collection for the good of the congregation.

Presently the grand old organ began to peal forth the strains of a wedding march. The members of the congregation looked at each other. They all asked the same question: "What does all this mean?" Charles Moser arose from his seat in the gallery, came down the winding stairs and walked through the aisle to the altar, where he was met by Mary Brown, and they were made man and wife.

The ceremony over, the minister pronounced the benediction. The organ again pealed forth its sweetest strains, and the happy couple passed out through the long aisle amid the congratulations of the old and the young. When they emerged from the church, Charles gently pressed Mary's hand as he said: "Well, Mary, you are mine at last. Jim DeStay did not get you after all his trials and schemes."

"Yes," said Mary, "our petitions are answered. We will now forget the past and begin life anew."

As they were walking happily along on their way homeward, Charles related some of his adventures and the cause of his leaving home.

"I never knew why you left home," said Mary, "until to-day, when you spoke to Jim DeStay. You cannot imagine through what trials and troubles I have passed since you left, but now remember, Charlie, that it is your duty to lay the past aside and forgive a wrong. You must forgive Jim DeStay. I know you will."

"But, Mary, that was a terrible beating, and I can—"

"Now, Charlie," said Mary pleadingly, you must lay that aside and forget it. I hardly think that those fellows would attempt it again on my big boy. I mean my husband."

"Mother," said Charles playfully as he hung his hat on the rack and seated himself on a chair by the side of his wife, "may I remain over night here, or must I go to the hotel for lodging?"

"You may remain here," said his mother. "Your wife will vouch for your good conduct this evening. You know, last evening you had no one to vouch for you."

"But, mother—"

"Charlie, supper is ready and—"

At that moment the door opened and the superintendent, whom he had met at the quarry in the morning, walked into the room.

A young man who was at the sale had called on the superintendent and in his conversation had given a full description of Charles, at the same time stating that Charles had purchased the property, and, besides, had gone to the church to marry Mary Brown.

"That will do! That will do, begobs!" said the superintendent excitedly as he grabbed his hat and made for the door, to the astonishment of his wife. "That is water on my mill," continued he.

"What is the trouble?" said the wife eagerly, following her husband.

"Oh, not much, and begobs it may amount to a great deal."

"But what is the trouble?" again asked the wife in her excitement.

The superintendent related the story about the stranger who had come to the quarry and ordered him to tell the young man to get ready and go home, and how the workmen had had the laugh on him all day about it.

"My congratulations, Mary," he said, grasping her by the hand.

Mary was quick to introduce her husband to him.

"Mr. Moser, congratulations to you—congratulations to you," said the superintendent as he took a good survey of Charles.

"He is my son," said Charles' mother.

"Well, begobs! ye are the very man," said he, "who was at the quarry this morning. Are ye not?"

Charles nodded assent.

"An' ye saw that young man whom I told ye was pining to go home to see his Mary."

Charles blushed furiously as he again nodded assent, while Mary stood by with eyes wide open enquiring what was the cause of the excitement.

"An' ye said: 'Tell the young man to get ready to go home. I will see to it that he will get the money to go.' An' I just heard about your buying the property; an' I just took my hat without tellin' to anyone but my wife, you see, an' came over here, you see, to find if ye would have a little spare money over and live up to your promise. You see, the young man might commit suicide, if—"

"Here is the money," said Charles excitedly. "Tell him to go at once."

Mary looked at Charles with astonishment.

"Yes, Mary," said Charles playfully, "I made that contract this morning while I was in trouble myself, and I must live up to it now."

"Why, Charlie, I never said a word."

"I know you did not, but—"

"Well, an' begobs," interrupted the superintendent on seeing the money. "Ye are goin'—"

"Yes, send the young man home as soon as you possibly can. You see, home-sickness is— Here, one moment. Tell him to give this to his Mary with the congratulations of my wife. I think they can begin housekeeping with that amount."

"Well, begobs, ye got a big heart anyway. You are the very young man we need here," said the su-

perintendent as he left the house, and at the same time looked at the money in his hand.

"Well, Charlie, you are the same good soul you ever was. I see you are going to make good use of your money." Hesitating a moment, she continued: "You must have struck a gold mine when you were away. Now I am sure we can make improvements in our church. You see, a new organ is needed very much."

"Mary, you have the say in that matter. There is—"

"Oh, Charlie! don't go out!" cried Mary excitedly on seeing Jim DeStay standing at the gate beckoning for Charles to come out.

But Charles walked to the door.

"Charlie, please don't go; he may have a weapon!"

"It would be very cowardly in me would I not go out. I don't think he—"

"Charlie," said Jim as he approached him, "I—I—thought as you h—a—d the g—i—r—l an' the prop—er—ty that y—o—u might be want—in' to buy my f—a—r—m also. You know—"

"No, Jim," said Charles, looking tenderly at the miserable looking man standing before him, "I have plenty of land—more than I can farm myself. You just remain where you are. Turn over a new leaf, and I think we can get along well with each other. But, remember, Jim— Well, it is all over with me. Turn over a new leaf and—"

Jim turned abruptly on his heels, and as he walked away he said to himself: "Very good advice; very

good advice. But I think it is too late. I made a terrible mistake."

Charles did not take well to farming, for he was not accustomed to the work anymore. He spent a great deal of time in the kitchen relating his adventures to Mary, who was always eager to listen to him. He was always considered a good neighbor, and his friends would frequently say to themselves: "Why should he work? He is good pay, and we have no reason to find fault with him."

But one day as he was looking over his mail he saw a letter from his old home, as he called it, in New York state. He opened it and glanced hurriedly over its contents.

"What is it, Charlie?" said Mary, on seeing his sad face.

"A letter from my old home in New York state."

"Good news?"

"Partly good and partly bad. Colonel Musser is dead."

"Oh, Charlie! that is too bad!"

"Yes, it is. I was not prepared for this sad news, but the fact is I was thinking of the Colonel very much of late."

"What is the good news?"

"I am appointed his executor and the way it seems to me I am to receive the bulk of his property."

"Whew!"

"Mrs. Musser wants me to come to her at once and I must prepare to leave at the earliest moment possible."

"But, what will I do?"

"Why, Mary," said he, hesitating several moments, "I don't know as I would like to be there without you. Our parents are no more and it matters very little where we are. Bessie will go with us. She will be good company for you and Mother Musser."

"Charlie, I am not prepared to go. I must have a dressmaker in the house for at least two weeks before I shall be ready."

"Why not have her four weeks?"

"Oh, Charlie! you are perfectly mean. You are teasing me. You—"

"Well—then—get—the—dressmaker," said Charles pleasantly, "I would not like to have the bootblacks get after you as they were after Colonel Musser and myself when I entered New York City for the first time."

In due time Charles and Mary left for their new home. The beautiful scenery along the Hudson river and the kindness shown to them by the people along the route was a novelty to Mary. Captain Murry and Mr. Money were exceptionally kind to both.

But Charles was eager to reach the home of Colonel Musser, where he knew that Mother Musser was anxiously awaiting his arrival, and he made haste in his journey. When he passed the place where the Colonel and his wife had met with the accident, which saved him from an ignominious death, he could not suppress a sigh. Turning to Mary, as he shuddered, he exclaimed: "This is a terrible looking place. At one time I—" He did not finish for fear of exciting Mary, who stared at him wildly.

At last they reached the grand old Musser home. Maggie was the first to see them. "Golly, gosh!" cried she to the old lady, as she bounded into the room, "Mars Charlie and de missus am here at last to take charge of de ol' plantation, an' things will go better."

"Charlie, my son!" said Mother Musser, as she embraced him, "I was longing to see you and your Pennsylvania wife for a long time. It was my continual prayer, and God has answered it. I will now place everything in your care. You will look after my interest, as well as of yours, and I know that all will go well. I will make my home with you in my declining years. You are the only one I have to look to for help. You were a 'Godsend' to us. You have plenty and to spare, and I beg of you to follow in the footsteps of Colonel Musser and do not get a blemish on that honored name. He was sometimes rash, but all brave men are sometimes rash in their doings. He had a big heart—the churches, schools, colleges and the poor can all testify to it. He fought nobly for his country—nobly, indeed. I glory in it. He left this world without a stigma on that honored name, and I again ask you not to get a blemish on it." Then, turning to Mary, she continued: "I can now fully realize why Charlie was continually pining to go home. I am fully rewarded for my urging and aiding him to go. I feel assured that you will be a daughter to me and not shirk me in my declining years."

"Mother," said Charles, with emotion, "I will be a son to you, and I feel assured my wife will be a

MRS. COLONEL MUSSER

daughter to you. That old honored name, for the sake of my father and mother, and for the sake of Colonel Musser, and for your sake, never will have a blemish on it."

Mary could not speak, but kind, loving Bessie, with tears streaming down her face, embraced Mother Musser affectionately as she said: "Mother, I will continually be your companion. I will be a daughter to you, and you will supply the place to me of the mother I lost in my infancy."

"Bessie, you shall not regret it," said Mother Musser affectionately.

But Maggie stood back and gazed on the scene. Then, taking courage, she said to Charles: "What will become of poor black Billy, Dinah and Maggie?"

"You will be well provided for," said Charles. "Your souls are as white as my soul."

Charles now began the management of Colonel Musser's vast estate. He was elected to the many positions of trust and honor which Colonel Musser had held. He was a free giver to churches, schools and colleges, and especially to the poor.

One day as he was attending to business in Albany and he and his wife were walking along the street, he met Captain Murry.

"Charlie, me boy," said the blunt-speaking Captain, as he placed his hand on Charles' shoulder, "I am all alone now, except sister. I fear that I will not be here long any more. I want you to be particularly careful in the management of my estate. Never let my

sister and those dear little ones get into want. I trust you to everything. Have the little ones well educated, and, after my sister has passed away, divide the property among her children."

Charles Moser stared at Captain Murry. He could not realize at first what he was saying.

"Charlie," said the Captain, on seeing the look of astonishment on his face, "you will follow the instructions as given in my will as closely as you can. I ask no more of you, and besides I feel assured that you will do so."

"Well, what does this mean, anyway?" said Charles to his wife, after parting with Captain Murry. "I can not fathom it."

"Charlie, it means that you were a respectable young Christian gentleman when you sojourned amongst these people, and by the grace of God you are reaping your reward. But, now Charlie, as all these honors are conferred on you, let us not forget that we are always in danger of making mistakes."

[The End]